

PLUCK AND LUCK

BIG BONE ISLAND OR LOST IN THE WILDS OF SIBERIA

AND OTHER STORIES

By Capt Thos. H. Wilson



Crouching down, Fred ran straight for the man who held Blanche, never heeding the arrows which came flying at him. Springing upon him he gave him a rap with the belaying-pin and knocked him senseless.

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BIG BONE ISLAND

OR, LOST IN THE WILDS OF SIBERIA

By CAPT. THOS. H. WILSON

CHAPTER I.—The Corvette That Came in the Storm.

"What do you make out of it, Fred? Is it Kotenoy Island or what?"

"I guess it's 'what' all right, old man. Don't think there is anybody on board the Seal that has the slightest idea what that island is."

Nick Wendell leaned over and took another look at the dark wooded shore which they had just passed.

"It's a dreary looking place, all right though," he remarked.

"Terrible," replied Fred Philips, Nick's particular chum on board the Seal.

"How would you like to be left there, Fred?"

"Don't joke about it, Nick," said the young sailor, speaking more seriously than was his usual way. "You can hardly imagine what a dreadful thing it would be. Here we are off the north coast of Siberia at the risk of our lives, but then we have got plenty to remind us of home on board the Seal. To be dropped on that island! Why, a lifetime might pass and no ship ever come near it again. Captain Spence says we are right off the mouth of the Lena river. I don't suppose there is a more desolate spot in the whole world."

On went the staunch little steamer Seal, Spence master, New Bedford her home port. Stubbornly she poked her nose into the narrow ice channels drawing back sometimes, going ahead at others, actually breaking the ice in many places as she forced her way nearer and nearer to the great delta of the Lena river, which, after pushing its way for a thousand miles through the wilds of Northern Siberia, empties at last by a huge delta into those Arctic seas. The Seal was owned by the same firm which owned the whaler Eliza Jane Perkins, Captain Rush, which got nipped in the ice off the Lena delta the previous fall and was supposed to be either lost or locked in the ice still.

"Was the Perkins still there, stuck in the ice which scarcely ever leaves the vicinity of the delta?"

This was something which remained to be discovered and just what the Seal and her hardy crew had come to find out. As night settled down over the rescuing steamer Captain Spence, a most

able seaman, who had put in several winters in the Arctic, detected signs of an approaching storm. The Seal had now run up alongside a large island further in toward the delta than the one just mentioned. Being under the lee of the island, Captain Spence wisely concluded to stay there and lost no time in dropping anchor when the snowstorm came on. It was a wild night, yet by no means very cold. The wind came sweeping over the great snow fields of Siberia bringing a damp, icy chill with it, and such snow as the crew of the Seal had never seen before. Captain Spence had been up all the night before, but he positively refused to turn in now. He turned to and helped the boys sweep snow, while the mate kept lookout forward for signs of an ice pack, which might come sweeping down upon them, for remember it was June and even at this late hour still light. Something very unexpected was going to happen that night and it began within ten minutes after Fred had relieved the mate in his watch forward. Fred was pacing up and down the narrow space allowed him when all at once he saw a large black object loom up in the snow right ahead.

"Craft on the weather bow!" he called out, "Can't tell whether it's a steamer or what it is. Better come and see!"

"Thunder and guns! What do you mean, boy?" roared the captain. "There can be no craft ahead of us here unless it has dropped down from the moon."

"It's a steamer all right, sir. Hark! Don't you hear her screw grinding? She'll run us down as sure as fate."

"Holler!" shouted Captain Spence. "Give 'em the hail!"

"Ahoy! Ahoy! Mind where you are going! You'll run us down!" yelled Fred, who had a voice like a foghorn when he chose to exert it.

Suddenly the bows of a small steamer were seen and a voice called out some unintelligible words.

"By thunder! She's a Russian!" gasped Capt. Spence. "Them fellers never have no pity. They'd just as soon send us all to Davy Jones' as eat."

"Hello, you there! Hello! You Ingles?" a hoarse voice shouted through the thickly falling snow.

"American. The steamer Seal, of New Bed-

ford. Spence, master!" the captain yelled. "For heaven's sake look where you are going or you will run us down!"

"Make your mind easy, Capt. Spence," came the answer. "Ve vill not run you down—no!"

"Thank heaven we are safe, boys!" gasped the captain, "but what in the world can it mean? Who can these people be?"

"Whalers?" suggested Fred.

"No; there are no Russian whalers."

"Sealers then? Fur gatherers?"

"Possibly."

"They are going to drop anchor."

"Yes, and they are going to board us, boys. I don't like this for a cent."

All hands on deck were straining their eyes peering at the steamer. She was a much larger craft than the Seal. As she swung around, presenting her broadside toward the Yankees, Fred saw that her sides were pierced for guns and that there were many men on board dressed in uniform. Several paced the deck carrying rifles. It was a small armored corvette flying the Russian flag. "They are going to board us!" cried Fred, suddenly. "See! They are getting ready to lower a boat."

Darkness was now upon them and the snow had begun to let up a little. Apparently it was nothing but a squall, after all, for in one or two places the clouds were breaking and the glittering stars of the Arctic night peeping through. Into the boat, which was an unusually long one, ten men beside the rower crowded. They were all armed with rifles except one, a man over six feet tall with a huge blonde beard, who carried a sword at his side. Rapidly the boat pulled toward the Seal and the officer, saluting Capt. Spence, came aboard, followed by his bodyguard, who ranged themselves behind him with a military air. Not a word was spoken. Capt. Spence saluted and said a few words of welcome, after waiting a moment for the officer to speak. The Russian eyed the Yankee skipper superciliously, running his eyes along the men before him.

"Those two will do!" he said, suddenly pointing to Fred and Nick. "Capt. Spence, I must trouble you to lend me those two boys for an hour or so. If you refused I shall turn the guns of the Katherina on you and blow your craft sky high!"

CHAPTER II.—A Mysterious Business.

"Wha-what do you mean?" gasped the captain. "What outrage is this? Impressment of American seamen! Threats on the high seas! No, sir. You can't have one of my men. I'll not allow it. I'll complain to the Admiralty Courts. I——"

"Stop, Captain Spence," broke in the officer, who was shrewd enough to see that all this was only bluff. "I have no time to argue with you and no disposition to do so. I am here in the interests of the Czar of all the Russias. His Imperial will is never questioned. You have simply to obey!"

"But how about the Star Spangled Banner?" cried the captain. "Does that cut no ice up here in Siberia? I want you to understand——"

"Peace!" cried the officer. "Hold that long tongue of yours in check, captain. If I turn the guns of the Katherina upon your steamer you and your Star Spangled Banner will go to feed

the fishes. Hark you; it is a government matter. No one will ever hear of the Seal, of New Bedford, again, or, if they should, I will have my story ready to tell."

"What do you want those boys for?" demanded the captain. "Haven't you got men enough of your own?"

"Stop! Don't seek to pry into the secrets of His Imperial Majesty. I shall not take the men off against your will, but I have fairly stated the alternative—make your choice!"

"If I consent, will my boys be returned to me alive?"

"Yes; an hour after daybreak at the latest."

Fred Philips stepped forward then.

"I'm ready to go and take my chances, Capt. Spence!" he said, bravely. "I don't want to see the other boys suffer through me. I've got too much interest in the object of our visit to this place to stand in the way of its success."

"Well spoken, my boy!" cried the Russian officer. "And the other——"

"Nick, what about you?" asked Capt. Spence, uneasily.

Nick stepped out beside Fred.

"What's got to be has got to be, I s'pose," was all he said.

"At least let me know the nature of the service my men are going on," the captain said.

"Sorry to refuse you," was the reply, "but it can't be told. Boys, step over here among my men."

The order was obeyed.

"At least let me know your name——" began the captain, only to be cut short again.

"Sorry, but I haven't got my card with me," chuckled the officer. "Good day!"

Then, without further ceremony, he withdrew with his prisoners, if Fred and Nick can be so styled. They were ordered down into the long boat, which immediately returned to the corvette. Once on the dock of the corvette the boys were surrounded by an eager crowd of sailors and marines, who stared at them as though they had been wild beasts. Suddenly a bell rang out forward. Immediately there was a hauling on ropes and a creaking of blocks and a great strip of sail cloth was raised above the guards on the side toward the Seal, completely concealing the deck of the corvette from any one who happened to be watching there. Again the bell struck and suddenly twenty lanterns appeared in the hands of as many men, who formed themselves in a double line reaching from the companionway over to the starboard sail, close to which the boys stood. Fred and Nick waited breathlessly, puzzled beyond measure to know what was going to happen next. They were not kept long in suspense.

Suddenly in the companionway appeared four men carrying a couch upon which lay something covered with an old bedspread. It was the body of a man beyond all doubt, but even the head was concealed. In solemn procession the men marched between the lanterns with their burden. They had almost reached the sail when a piercing scream rang out from the cabin below. Upon deck a young and decidedly pretty girl came rushing, waving her hands wildly above her head.

"No! No! You shall not kill him!" she screamed in English. "Let it be me, Your Highness! Let it be me!"

She rushed after the couch bearers, but the

officer sprang forward, and, seizing her by the arm, roughly swung her around, saying something in Russian—angry, hissing words. The girl screamed and struggled to free herself. The lantern bearers laughed as though it was a good joke. The officer's hand was raised! he would surely have struck the hysterical girl a cruel blow but for Fred, whose Yankee blood was boiling now.

"Keep your hands off the lady!" shouted Fred, springing in front of the Russian. "In the land where I belong we don't strike women. Let her alone, I say!"

Pushing himself in front of the girl, Fred faced the brute as bravely as if he had been the commander of the corvette himself instead of a prisoner, completely at the mercy of all on board.

CHAPTER III.—Abandoned in the Ice.

"You fool! You have sealed your fate and that of your friend!" the officer cried out.

Indeed it looked so. Twenty cocked revolvers were pointed at Fred and Nick now. As for the girl, she had dropped to the deck in a dead faint. Fred Philips struck the Russian officer in the heat of his passion, which, it must be allowed, was a very foolish thing to do, if he cared anything for his own life.

"I don't want to make trouble, but I can't stand by and see a lady abused. It isn't my style," replied Fred, putting on a good show of courage.

The officer whose face had been slightly cut by a blow from Fred, wiped the blood away and frowned, but never answered a word, which the boys could understand. He addressed the men in Russian, however. Immediately the grill was raised and carried below. Then the bearers set down the couch and a section of the rail was removed. This done the officer pulled away the bedspread. Upon the couch lay a handsome young man elegantly dressed and wearing many medals.

He lay on his back and seemed to be in a deep sleep. Certainly he was not dead, for Fred could see his chest heave as he breathed. Being close to the rail, the boys had looked overboard long before this. There was a long boat with six rowers in it lying in the water and fastened behind was a smaller boat, in which were various boxes, bales, etc.; in fact, quite a collection of luggage, with a pair of stout oars lying across the seats.

"Young man," said the officer, turning on Fred with as much coolness as though nothing had occurred, "if I did what I ought to do I should instantly order you shot. But I am a man who long ago learned to control my temper at all times, and I advise you to learn to control yours; these are my orders: You and your friend are to take that young man and lower him into the rear boat, getting in afterward yourselves. You can arrange the business as you see fit. There are ropes and the boat will be brought up by my men. Understand, we cannot touch that man and will not under any circumstances. If you allow him to fall into the water he must drown."

Fred started to make some reply to these strange orders, but the officer instantly cut him short, saying:

"Obey! Either that or die!"

The Russian drew a handsome gold watch from his pocket.

"It is now a quarter to twelve o'clock," he said, smoothly. "Young man, I give you just fifteen minutes. If at the end of that time you three are not in that boat you will all be shot and all go overboard. Choose!"

There was evidently no help for it but to obey. Fred raised no further objections.

"We've got to do it, Nick," he said. "Lend me a hand."

Fred made a noose and slipped it up under the arms of the sleeping man. Then making fast the loose end around a stanchion, with Nick's help they lifted the sleeper off the couch and carefully lowered him into the boat which the rowers in the long boat brought up alongside. The officer watched the operation in silence.

"Good! Well done!" he exclaimed. "Boy, you're an artist. I like you in spite of what you did to me. I wish it was in my power to know you better, but it is not. Go now! Get into the boat with your friend."

There was nothing for the boys to do but to go aboard the boat and they went. Once they had made the sleeper as comfortable as possible and covered him with the heavy blankets which they found in the boat, the officer called out something in Russian and immediately the rowers pulled away. It was a strange, strange proceeding. In silence Fred and Nick, with their sleeping companion, were pulled off under the stars, which had now come out in all the glory of the Arctic night. Immediately the lights on board the steamer were extinguished and the next thing the boys knew the propeller began its grind. The corvette was moving slowly after them among the islands.

For an hour and over the voyage continued. At last the corvette stopped, but the rowers in the long boat pulled steadily forward, moving up a torturous channel between two endless stretches of field ice. For half an hour more the journey continued. They had now come in sight of a long, low island past which the open water came sweeping with a good deal of force. So far there had been no sign of the sleeper awaking. Again and again Fred tried to arouse him, but it was just no use.

"What do you suppose is going to be the end of this?" asked Nick for the hundredth time, when they approached the island mentioned above.

Fred knew already, but he saw no use in disturbing Nick. The rowers in the long boat had cut the tow line. Wheeling around they now came flying down the ice-river, toward the drifting boat. One glance at the dull, heavy faces of the Russians was enough to tell Fred how little he had to hope from them. It was utterly useless to do any talking, but he had another plan.

Throwing off the blanket which covered the sleeper, he got his arm around him and raised him up. He was evidently some very important person. Many of the medals which hung to his breast were of solid gold and not a few were studded with diamonds. His head fell over against Fred's and he slumbered on entirely unconscious of having been moved.

Helped along by the current, the long boat passed on into the windings of the channel and was soon lost to view among the great hummocks,

which in many places rose high above the level of the ice.

"They've gone, Fred. They've shaken us! Oh! what shall we do?" Nick called out.

"Row first," replied Fred, lowering the sleeper into his old position again.

He seized the oars and pulled on after the long boat.

"We are lost in the wilds of Siberia if we lose sight of them, Nick!" he exclaimed. "Even at the last moment something may happen if——"

A loud report drowned Fred Phillips' closing words, to be followed by a series of fearful crashes coming one upon another so closely that it seemed like one mighty roar.

"Great Scott! What's that?" gasped Nick.

"The ice breaking up," shouted Fred, half rising in the boat.

A startling sight met his gaze.

The great ice hummocks were all on the move now. On they came tumbling over one another, with sounds like great stones grinding, crunching, roaring on.

The channel disappeared, the field ice closed them.

"We are goners!" gasped Nick. "We might as well have let them fellers kill us at the start, Fred."

And indeed it looked so.

CHAPTER IV.—The Arrival at Big Bone Island.

It was a most fortunate thing for our two Yankee boys from the Seal that it was not very cold.

The end of the first chapter of their strange adventure had come.

The boat was locked in the field ice and drifting rapidly down the great Lena delta.

They had escaped the crashing hummocks, but their present situation was bad enough. The mouth of the great Lena River, which in length and swiftness of current rivals the Mississippi, is broken up into innumerable small channels, as we have already stated. Many scientific men believe that if the ice could once all melt the Lena delta would disappear. It is made up of half frozen soil, tree trunks, rocks and debris of all kinds, which during many ages, has been washed down the river, but owing to the shortness of the open season has not been able to work out to sea. This vast collection of frozen rubbish spreads over an immense surface and is penetrated by water courses running in every direction. Through one of these channels the boat had been towed by the crew of the Russian corvette. The sudden breaking up of the ice had now altered the entire condition of things.

The channel through which the boys had passed no longer existed.

Hundreds of other new ones had formed.

The boat was being carried by the ice into one of these new channels.

It might be drifting toward the corvette and the Seal or it might be going further and further away from it every minute. It was quite impossible for any one to tell. Such was the situation. What was the remedy? This was something which it was quite impossible for either Fred or Nick to determine. After the first fear was over and

they found themselves free from any immediate danger of death, the boys turned their attention to their sleeping companion.

"We may as well take things as we find them, Nick," remarked Fred, philosophically. "There's plenty of grub in this boat and lots of other things which may be useful to us. We want to take an inventory and find out what we've got, and, above all, we want to get this young fellow awake if there is any way of waking him up. We want to find out who he is and what it's all about."

"What do you think of it yourself, Fred?" asked Nick. "Why on earth did they take us off the Seal and put us with this man?"

"You have asked me the same question at least twenty times before, Nick. I can only answer as I have always answered it. I think this young man has been drugged. I believe he is some Russian noble and that for some reason or other which we don't understand, and may never understand, he has been brought here and abandoned by order of the Czar.

"They didn't want to kill him outright. They seemed to be afraid to touch him and that makes me think that perhaps he belongs to the imperial family. It is against the law for anyone to touch the Czar or any of his family unless they are expressly told to do so. They have abandoned this fellow here hoping that he may never escape. They have left us with him so as to give him a chance for his life. We don't understand the Russians. They are the most superstitious people on earth. They want to get rid of this young fellow, but they don't dare to kill him, so they have taken this way of handling the case. It all seems very strange to us, but I suppose it looks all right to them."

"I wish we were well out of it," groaned Nick, "but I don't look to ever get out of it. I expect to die here in Siberia. I don't believe this fellow will ever wake up. I believe he'll die just as he is."

"Pshaw! I've no time to waste with any such talk as that," said Fred. "I'm going to work to see if I can't get this fellow awake. Open some of those boxes and hampers, Nick. Let's see what we have got to depend upon."

Fred met with no success. He tumbled the sleeper over; he shouted, he pinched him and pulled him, called in his ear, got off one of his boots and tried tickling him on the soles of his feet, did everything that he could think of, but all in vain.

The young man slept calmly on, his chest heaving regularly, his face retaining a natural color.

All used up by his exertions, Fred abandoned the attempt at last and turned to look into Nick's discoveries, which were truly wonderful in their way. A succession of astonished shouts had gone with the opening of each box and hamper. Here were provisions of all sorts, canned meat, soup, vegetables, fruit, etc. There were articles of clothing, a fine Winchester rifle, a pair of revolvers and a good supply of cartridges to match both. There were books in French, Russian and English, a supply of tobacco and cigarettes, a selection of pipes, matches and all sorts of things, in fact, but there was no map or chart, nothing which would help the exile to escape from Siberia in all this collection of goods intended to make him comfortable for a long stay.

The boys would not have known that they were moving at all if it had not been for a higher ridge of ice on either side of the channel which remained stationary. Far in the distance was a chain of wooded hills, and back of those was a range of snow-capped mountains. At a short distance ahead of them they could see a row of stunted fir trees, toward which they were moving, and on the right of these trees rose towering ice cliffs, the end of a glacier if they had but known it, which was slowly forcing its way down from the mountains into the sea.

These same ice bluffs were already projecting far over the water of the delta and were soon destined to break off and form an iceberg according to the law of glacial rivers. It was necessary for us to go into all this description to make clear the startling events which are to follow, but we are done now and may take up our story again about an hour later when all at once just as the boys came abreast the line of fire trees, the ice field, with a mighty roar, broke into a thousand pieces, great spaces of clear blue water appearing between.

The shock to the boat was not as great as might have been anticipated. The boys now found themselves in open water, with a large island partially covered with stunted trees lying right ahead of them.

"Look! Look! A house!" cried Fred, as they went sweeping around a point where the newly opened channel separated the island from the glacier. "That's our hope, Nick. Get out the oars. We must make a landing. Hello, there! Hello! Ahoy! Ahoy!"

Fred was full of excitement over his remarkable discovery and all enthusiasm, as he always was under such circumstances. Nick threw out the oars, pulling for all he was worth, while Fred kept on shouting, hoping to see some one appear at the door of the rude log hut which stood well back from the shore among the trees. No one appeared. The hut was a substantial affair, but it stood gloomy and deserted looking. Behind it rose a sort of tower, built of logs, with a winding stairway leading up to a room shut in by glass windows about fifteen feet above the roof.

"That ought to be a signal service station, or, rather, an observatory for some scientific expedition," remarked Fred, "but I'm afraid there is nobody there."

"How clear the water is!" said Nick, looking over the side of the boat. "It isn't very deep, either, but what are them queer looking things down there on the bottom? They look like great big bones."

"Why, they are bones," exclaimed Fred. "Elephant bones, too. Look! There's a skull with a pair of tusks. By gracious, no! They are not elephants'. They are mammoths'. Look, Nick! Look! There are hundreds of them scattered all over the bottom—they run in under the island! I've heard of something like this before. Can it be—"

"What?" asked Nick, as Fred suddenly paused. "Well, I declare! I've guessed right first clip!" cried Fred, pointing toward the hut. "Look there!"

It was a signboard nailed against the side of the hut. There were rudely formed letters on it, spelling words in Russian, French and English.

"Big Bone Island!" cried Fred, as the boat shot into the little cove.

CHAPTER V.—How the White Bear Came With the Storm.

"Big Bone Island!"

That was the way the English sign read and there was no doubt that if the boys had been able to read Russian and French they would have found that the other signs read the same. Fred was a well posted fellow. He had heard of the astronomical station erected by the Russian government on Big Bone Island, at the mouth of the Lena River, for the purpose of studying the phenomena of the aurora borealis, and he at once recognized the fact that they had reached that once famous place.

Hastily explaining to Nick, the boat was drawn up on the shore and the boys found themselves staring about at one of the most peculiar bits of scenery known on earth.

Leaving their strange companion still slumbering in the boat, the boys now hurried up to the log hut. The door was not fastened and Fred threw it back and looked in upon a comfortable room, fairly well furnished with sleeping bunks ranged around two sides.

"This will do for a while, Nick!" he exclaimed. "By gracious, it's better than the boat, anyhow. We must build a fire—see all the wood there is collected in that shed out there. With the stuff we have got in the boat and what there is here we can be comfortable for a long while. Thank heaven, summer is coming on and we haven't got cold weather to face very long."

"Yes, but just the same there is going to be a snowstorm," replied Nick, looking up at the sky. "It will be rain," replied Fred, confidently. "It's not cold enough for snow."

"Hadn't we better get that fellow up here?"

"Right away, first thing; then it's breakfast and then I'm going up in the tower to see if we can see anything of the corvette or the Seal."

This programme was carried out without delay. The unfortunate young man was a dead weight on the boys' hands. Fred took the feet and Nick the shoulders and together they carried him up to the hut, undressed him and put him to bed in one of the bunks, covering him with plenty of blankets. Except for the same regular breathing, he might have been a dead man.

During the undressing process Fred tumbled him about rather roughly, but there was no other sign of life.

"Will he ever wake up, do you suppose?" asked Nick, looking down at the unfortunate fellow after they had finished their work.

"I'm beginning to wonder," replied Fred. "He may just sleep on until he dies. It is impossible to say. Hustle around now, Nick, and help me get our stuff up from the boat."

By the time everything was stowed away in the hut the sky was so clouded over that Fred concluded if he was going to take an observation it ought to be done at once. Among other treasures which the boat contained was a first-rate opera glass. Fred took it, and, followed by Nick, ascended the winding staircase to the observatory, which was entered by means of a trap-door. There was a large table here and several chairs,

with drawing boards upon the table and an oil stove. This was all the furnishing. The scientific instruments which once had played a most important part in the observatory had all been removed when the station was abandoned. Fred threw open one of the big windows, which moved in grooves top and bottom, and looked off upon the dreary scene.

"There's the corvette!" he exclaimed, pointing seaward. "Look, Nick! There's the Russian! By gracious, she's moving this way, too."

The steamer, apparently surrounded by ice, was plainly to be seen about five miles distant. Fred turned the opera glass upon her and declared that she was certainly moving.

"She's making for the island, Nick!" he exclaimed. "As sure as you live, she's making for the island. What are we going to do?"

"Stay and face the music, I suppose," replied Nick. "What else can we do?"

"Nothing. There is no help for it. My theory is they have no idea of seeing us here at the station. There is going to be lively doings when they find out their mistake."

"Phew! How the wind blows! Can't you shut the window, Fred?"

"I can, of course, and I will in a minute. I want to see first if I can't locate the old Seal."

"I don't see a thing of her."

"Nor I. I may find her, though."

"Look at that mountain of ice, Fred! Isn't it wonderful?"

Nick's eye had roamed across the open channel to the glacier, which towered some four hundred feet above them, not over a thousand yards away.

"I can't make out the Seal," replied Fred, paying no attention to the glacier, "but she must be down there somewhere. What was that noise? Didn't you hear?"

"Sounded like some animal growling," said Nick, leaning far out of the window. "Here comes the snow."

Fred was wrong and Nick was right. It was snow and not rain which was to break over Big Bone Island that day. It came with a rush; came sweeping down so suddenly that before Fred could close the window the air was white with the driving flakes and the mass of clouds which carried them went sweeping seaward, obscuring everything in just no time. The corvette disappeared; even the glacier was but dimly seen. Looking back out of the windows behind them the boys could see nothing but one grand whirl.

"We had better get back into the hut," sighed Fred. "It may be only a squall, but we can do nothing further here."

As they passed from the observatory to the door of the hut the boys heard the same peculiar sound again, only very much louder. Fred thought it sounded like the growling of an animal, but he could see nothing. Closing the door against the storm, the boys now proceeded to get breakfast. By the time it was eaten a regular blizzard had set in. It looked very much as if they were to be housed for a long time to come.

"It's a bad job, Nick," remarked Fred. "I must say I don't relish the prospect, but at the same time it may keep the Russians from running the corvette up here."

"You don't want them to come then?"

"I'm sure I can't tell whether I do or not, Nick. I'm ready for any old thing, and——"

Bang! Bang! It was not a rifle shot, but something striking twice heavily against the door.

"Some one knocking!" cried Nick. "Who can it be?"

"Nobody. Where are those cartridges? We've got work to do here."

Fred had pocketed one of the revolvers, but he had not loaded it. This he did now in a hurry. Twice more the sound came against the door.

"What can it be?" cried Nick.

"Throw the door open suddenly. Stand back out of the way!" exclaimed Fred, the instant he had the revolver ready. "If I'm not away off in my guess you're going to see a polar bear."

"What! What! I won't open the door!"

"Then I will!" cried Fred.

He flung it open and leaped back, while Nick sprang on top of the table, shouting:

"A bear! A bear!"

Instantly Fred fired. The bear staggered, but made a rush into the room.

CHAPTER VI.—Lost in the Blizzard.

Fred's revolver cracked again and this time with greater effect. The shot took the bear between the eyes. That the big brute was not instantly killed was a wonder, but though a stream of blood ran down over its face it did not fall, but turned and trotted out of the hut, uttering savage growls.

"Hooray!" cried Fred. "We've got him now!" and he ran out of the hut after the bear.

Nick seized the rifle and hastily loaded it. Twice Fred's revolver spoke before he could follow him into the storm. There was such a whirl of flakes outside that Nick, as he ran on, could not see Fred at all, but in a moment he heard him shout:

"I've lost him, Nick! He's gone into the water. Get back to the hut. We run a good chance of losing ourselves if we don't take care."

"Oh, nonsense!" cried Nick. "How can we do that when the hut is close to us here?"

He came up to Fred, who was standing on the shore.

"There's where he went," said Fred, pointing off into the channel which ran between Big Bone Island and the glacier. "He was badly wounded, but I couldn't finish him. I tell you, Nick, this is a terrible storm; the best thing we can do is to get back to the hut as soon as we possibly can."

A sound like the report of a heavy cannon reached their ears through the gloom.

"It's a gun on the corvette," cried Nick.

"You can just bet it isn't," replied Fred. "It's the cracking of the ice over there on the glacier. I don't like this. I'm going back."

They turned and started for the hut, but short as had been the lapse of time since they left it, every sign of their footprints had vanished. The howling wind blew the snow around them in suffocating masses. It was all they could do to stand up against it as they toiled on. The moments passed, but the hut did not loom up as they hoped.

Had they passed it? Evidently they had. It was some moments before Fred could realize the startling truth.

"What did I tell you?" he panted. "We are

lost! We shall never be able to find the hut in the world."

"Why, it must be right here?" gasped Nick. "We can't miss it if we try."

"But we missed it all right. There! What do you say now? We've been traveling in a circle. Here we are at the shore again."

It was a fact. One step more and Fred would have plunged into the water.

"We must try it again," he gasped. "We can't stay here."

"As he turned his foot caught in one of the half buried bones and down he went into the snow, with Nick sprawling on top of him. It was the third time they had met with the same accident; it was almost impossible to avoid the bones.

"If we don't get back indoors we are done for," panted Fred, scrambling up. "Let's keep along the shore till we come to the boat, then we will try and strike a straight line up to the hut."

They pushed on, keeping close to the water's edge. Before they had gone a dozen yards they heard sounds in the distance which brought them to a halt.

"There's the corvette!" cried Fred. "I can hear the grinding of her propeller, can't you, Fred?"

"It sounds that way," replied Nick. "I wouldn't be sure, though."

"It is! It's the Russian. Hark! Don't you hear somebody hollering? We've got to face the music in a moment now!"

A hoarse voice was heard shouting through the gloom and then all in an instant there was a deafening report like the explosion of a boiler, followed by cracking, grinding, crunching sounds, awful to listen to.

"Look! Look! The ice!" shouted Fred.

Through the whirl of flakes they could see a huge section of the glacier topple forward across the channel. Instantly it dropped into the water with a tremendous splash, drenching the boys with a shower of spray, and its great, ragged peak came toppling over toward them.

"Run, Nick! Run for your life!" shouted Fred. "If that ever strikes us we are lost."

CHAPTER VII.—The Sleeper Awakens at Last.

The crash and roar of the falling ice was something to be remembered for a lifetime, and the sight witnessed by Fred Philips and Nick Wendell was one they never forgot.

Drenched with the water thrown high in the air by the falling berg, blinded by the snow, frightened half out of their senses, they turned and ran off into the storm, stumbling over the buried bones, groping their way blindly through the whirling flakes, expecting every moment to be their last. It was a tremendous experience. Words cannot picture it. Fred got his arm through Nick's and they struggled on together, for the awful fear of becoming separated had seized them both. It was no time for talk and not a word was spoken; it is safe to say that neither of them expected to reach the station, when all at once a voice was heard shouting through the gloom. What were the words? The boys could not make out, but the sound of a human voice in that awful moment recalled Fred to himself.

"It's our friend, the sleeper!" he exclaimed. "He has waked up. Hello! Hello!" he shouted at the top of his lungs.

"Hello!" came the answer. "This way! Hello!"

"Good!" cried Fred. "He can speak English, anyhow."

"Keep on hollering!" yelled Nick. "We're a-coming. Keep it up. It tells us where to go."

"Hello! Hello! Hello! Hello!"

Again and again came the cry, the boys stumbling on, following the sound.

"This is business!" cried Fred. "We shall soon make it. Hark! What was that?"

It was a sound almost as startling as the noise made by the cracking ice. First a crash and then many voices calling out in one terrified cry. Silence followed except for the hollering, which in a moment began again.

"That's the iceberg striking the corvette!" gasped Fred. "That's what it is, Nick."

"I don't know," said Nick, "but I do know I shall drop dead if we don't get somewhere soon. Hello! Hello! Hello! Hello! Gee! There's the station now!"

Without ever dreaming that the struggle was so nearly over they had suddenly come in sight of the door. The mysterious sleeper stood in there hollering through his hands. He burst out with a torrent of words in Russian, staggered forward and fell fainting in the snow.

"Gracious He's dead this time, sure!" gasped Fred. "Is there ever going to be any end to our troubles, Nick?"

But Fred was not the sort to wait for an answer to his complaining remark. He bent down and raised the young man out of the snow and with Nick's help got him into the bunk again. There was a bottle of brandy among the other stores which had been taken out of the boat. Fred immediately poured a little into a glass and forced it between the young man's lips. He swallowed it feebly, but did not open his eyes nor speak.

"He'll live all right," said Fred. "This is only a fainting fit. Start up the fire, Nick. Get the room as warm as possible. I believe it will be all right yet."

Shaking off the snow the boys went to work with a will. While Nick piled the wood on the fire Fred worked over the unfortunate young man and soon had the satisfaction of having him open his eyes. He looked at Fred and said something in Russian, feebly extending his hand, which Fred warmly grasped.

"We can speak only English," he said. "I think you can speak English, too. You did a few moments ago."

"Yes—I can. What is it all? Where am I? My wife—where is she?"

"You are in the old signal station on Big Bone Island," replied Fred quietly. "I want you to listen to me and try and understand what has happened. It will clear your mind. You can tell your own story afterward. Do you agree to that?"

"I agree to anything you say," was the answer. "I don't know you, but I suppose you are my friend."

"I certainly am. May I ask your name?"

Fred saw that his mind was greatly troubled and he humored him. Nick drew near and stood by while he quietly explained the whole situation. It was perfectly evident that the young Russian suffered agonies during the progress of Fred's

story, but as it advanced he grew calmer, and acted altogether like a young man of great force of character, who had determined to make the best of a bad situation. Occasionally he would murmur his thanks, but aside from that he did not speak until the story was all told.

"Let me get up. Let me sit by the fire," he then said. "I can stand. I feel altogether better now."

Nick placed a chair for him and Fred led him over to the blazing fire. For a few moments the Russian sat with his eyes fixed on the fire and then, turning to Fred, spoke as follows:

"Fred Philips, and you, too, young man. I want to thank you both right heartily for what you have done for me. You have, no doubt, saved my life. This is a plot to kill me. For certain reasons which I cannot state, none of those on board the corvette dared to lay a hand on me, so you were taken to do what they did not dare to do themselves. The young woman you saw was my wife. I need not tell you how troubled I am about her. Probably she is dead. No doubt they are all dead and the Katherina lies at the bottom of the sea crushed by the iceberg. It is all so terrible that I must not allow myself to think of it and I earnestly beg you will never allude to the matter again. We have but one thing to do and that is to try our best to escape from this awful situation. Can we do it? I am sure I do not know, but at least we can try. Here's my hand on it, Fred Philips; from this moment we must be as brothers. We must pull together. We must work to escape from Siberia. Can we do it? That remains to be seen."

He shook hands warmly with Fred and then did the same with Nick.

"But at least you will tell us your name," said Fred, a good deal disappointed by the young man's reticence, it must be owned.

"You can call me Raoul Detosky," was the reply. "I admit that it is not my true name. That I will not tell—I cannot. It would do you no good to know it and if we should escape it might—that's enough. I am Raoul, you are Fred and here is Nick with us. We are three brothers in affliction, so there let it stand."

"All right," said Fred. "Let it be so then. You'll find me ready to work, and—"

"A shot!" shouted Nick. "A shot! Somebody coming!"

A rifle had been suddenly discharged outside. Fred knew that the shot was a good distance off, but Nick did not seem to realize it and he hurriedly flung open the door, fully expecting to discover someone outside in the snow.

CHAPTER VIII.—After the Storm.

Nick was entirely mistaken in locating the shot just outside the door.

"That rifle was fired at least a mile away!" exclaimed Raoul, speaking in a bright, energetic fashion.

"That's what!" cried Fred; "but look! The storm is turning to rain. We can see now and that's one blessing. There goes the rifle again."

"Is it someone trying to signal us?" asked Raoul.

"Suppose we fire a shot and see if they answer it," replied Fred, reaching for the rifle.

"No," said Raoul, stopping him by an imperious gesture. "We are in more danger from the corvette's people than from anything else. We must be sure of our ground first. There should be an observatory here on Big Bone Island, and—"

"And there is! There it stands!" broke in Nick, pointing up at the tower.

"Oh, yes! I did not see it. Have we a glass?" "We have."

"Then that's our game. Come on, boys. Thanks to the rain, we may be able to get a view."

"So they all went up in the tower, where the mystery of the shot was explained the instant Fred pushed back the rolling sash.

The rain was coming down heavily, but from their lofty perch they were able to get a good view of their surroundings. Away down among the snow patches, which might be ice fields or islands, it was impossible to tell which, they could see the great iceberg towering skyward, while right beyond it lay the corvette, her bow high out of the water and her stern submerged.

"Struck by the iceberg!" cried Fred. "That's what has happened, but I don't understand about the shot."

"There!" exclaimed Raoul hoarsely. "Look there! Oh, my wife! Here am I helpless! I can do nothing to save her! Oh, if I was only blessed with wings!"

He pointed over among the snow patches to another channel at least a mile away. There was a trail of boats, four in number, working their way among the ice in a southeasterly direction. In the foremost the boys could just make out the form of a woman seated in the stern, with a group of men forward. The other boats were all filled with men pulling vigorously along the channel.

"Take the glass, Fred," said Raoul more calmly. "Tell me, my friend, if that is the lady you saw on the corvette."

"It is," replied Fred, fixing the glass to his eye. "It is the same person. They have deserted the corvette. Where can they be going?"

"Trying to find the station here, probably," said Nick.

"It may be," replied Raoul, "but there is another station somewhere in the neighborhood. It is No. 2, on Imishoff Island. It may be that Captain Demidoff is heading for there."

"That's the man who captured us?" asked Fred. "Yes."

"Who is he? An officer in the Russian navy?"

"Yes. Now, Fred, that is the last question I shall answer, so please ask no more. Come, let us make ourselves comfortable here and watch. Our work is plain now, or, at least, mine is. I must rescue my wife from the clutches of that scoundrel. You will stand by me in this, boys?"

"Of course we will" cried Fred, "but I only wish I could see something of the Seal."

The Seal was nowhere in sight, however. After the boats disappeared behind the ice hummocks, which they did after a moment, Fred looked in every direction for a steamer, but in vain. After they gave it up the boys returned to the house and did not leave it again that day. It would have been useless to attempt it. Raoul freely admitted that he was in no condition to venture out in that fearful storm in the boat.

"My only chance is to pull up my strength," he sensibly declared. "I shall be able to begin in the

battle by morning. Until then we must remain just where we are."

So that dreary day passed and a drearier night followed. Never in all his life had Fred seen such a rain, but when he got up at five o'clock next morning the storm had passed and the sun was blazing down upon the ice fields and the glittering glacier, with a brilliancy only seen in the Arctic regions in the late spring. Fred hurried up to the observatory to have a look, leaving Raoul and Nick still asleep in their bunks. Here he made a discovery at first glance. The big berg had moved on about its business and there lay the corvette some two miles distant, floating calmly on the water, moving slowly westward toward the range of hills which we have already mentioned. It had almost reached them and while Fred was still watching it passed behind the hills and disappeared. He hurried down out of the tower to meet Raoul, just coming out of the door, to whom he immediately communicated his discovery.

"What's the matter with pulling down there and seeing what shape the corvette is in?" he proposed.

"Not now," replied Raoul promptly. "You know what I want to do, Fred."

"But could we not do it better in the corvette? Suppose she is still afloat. If we could start her engines going and follow up Captain Demidoff we could soon bring him to terms with those big guns."

"A bold scheme, but it won't work," declared Raoul. "Demidoff is not the man to abandon the corvette if there was any chance of saving her. It would be waste of time, Fred. What we want first is breakfast and then the search for my wife begins."

Fred gave it up. There was something so commanding about Raoul's manner that there was no such thing as resisting him, so Nick was waked up and the fire was replenished and a good breakfast prepared. Then the boat was bailed out and loaded with such necessities as Fred thought would be indispensable in case the trip proved a longer one than was anticipated. About eight o'clock, with Fred and Nick at the oars and Raoul, in his gay uniform, seated in the stern, the rescue party started away from Big Bone Island and stood up the channel past the glacier with the intention of working over among the ice fields in the direction taken by the other boats. As they advanced, threading their way through the tortuous channels, Raoul grew more and more uneasy.

"We are going to have trouble," he exclaimed at last, looking this way and that. "It isn't a bit of use, boys. We can never make station No. 2 without knowing where it lies. Indeed, I'm afraid we are going to have trouble in finding our way back to Big Bone Island; there are hundreds of these channels; it is impossible to tell which way the boats went."

"It was over nearer the hills than where we are now," declared Nick.

"That's it!" cried Fred. "That gives me an idea. Suppose we land at the foot of one of the hills and climb to the top. There we can get a view of everything and if station No. 2 is in sight we shall be sure to see it. Raoul, what do you say?"

"I say yes, decidedly," replied Raoul, "but what have we here coming down the stream?"

"A boat!" cried Nick, "or what there is left of

it. It's bottomside up. Look! There's another a little further along."

Raoul groaned.

"This ends it," he said gloomily. "The ice is all breaking up. Those boats have been nipped. The whole party probably met their fate in the storm."

CHAPTER IX.—Caught on the Mammoth Tusk.

It was plain enough that both boats had been nipped in the ice and Fred began to wonder if they were not likely to meet with a similar fate.

"We'll steer for the foot of that hill," he exclaimed. "There was a broad channel running along the base of the hill comparatively free from ice."

The three boys—Raoul was but little older than Fred—now pulled the boat high up upon the beach and started up the hill. The rain had washed the fresh snow all away and the old snow lay in patches among the rocks. It was a rough climb, but at the end of about half an hour they reached the summit in safety and were well rewarded by obtaining an unbroken view of the country for miles around. They could see the observatory on Big Bone Island distinctly and were able to trace the line of the Lena River far back into the country. It was crowded with broken ice, making seaward at fearful speed. Fred saw at once that Big Bone Island lay considerably to the left of the main part of the delta, which accounted for the greater thickness of the ice around it, but search as they would they could see nothing of the second station on Imishoff Island, nor was the corvette visible.

"My theory is that the second station is hidden by those hills in front of us," replied Raoul. "We want to work around them, but to tell the truth this climb has about finished up my strength; if I can hold out to get back to the island it will be all I can hope to do."

"Sit down and rest a while," said Fred. "I'm going in further to that high rock over there."

"Go on, then. I'll stay here. I just feel as though I could not stir another step."

Raoul sat down on a stone while Fred, with Nick at his heels, started for the higher rock some three hundred yards away. Both the boys carried their provision bags and Fred had the rifle slung over his shoulder. They descended into a deep hollow, where there was plenty of snow, and then climbed up the high rock on the other side. Here they could look down into a deep valley which separated this hill from another and a higher one beyond it. This side of the hill being away from the sun was thickly covered with snow. The rain of the night before and the colder atmosphere of the morning had formed a crust all over this side of the hill which glittered like a mountain of silver; the ice lay thick on the rock, too, and the boys had to be very careful how they stepped.

"Look out for yourself, Fred!" cried Nick, "don't go too near the edge."

"Same to you," retorted Fred. "I'm all right. Now then for a look down the valley; by gracious, there it is!"

"What? Where?" cried Nick.

"The second station! Look the way I'm pointing. Can't you see the observatory?"

"That's Big Bone Island."

"No, it isn't. Big Bone Island is behind us. You've got turned round."

"Who says so?" asked Nick, turning around himself then to have a look in the other direction.

It was a fatal movement. Instantly Nick's feet slipped from under him and down he went on his back upon the icy rock.

"Oh, Fred! Save me!" he shouted.

Quick as a flash Fred made a grab for Nick's foot. He got hold of it, but the mischief was already done. Down went Nick over the edge of the sloping rock, pulling poor Fred after him over onto the slippery crust which covered this side of the hill.

"Oh! Oh! Let me go! Save yourself!" yelled Nick.

He did not realize that it was all too late. On they flew without meeting an obstruction until they were well down to the valley, when suddenly there came a drop of some thirty feet down into a deep hole filled with soft snow. Nick plunged over and dropped into that drift head foremost, Fred instantly following him, but somehow as he fell he managed to turn and went down feet first. He never reached the drift. Suddenly he came in contact with something hard at which he clutched desperately, his body slipping past it, but not until he had got a firm hold. To his utter amazement, as he looked up he could see the head of a huge beast looking down at him. Apparently it was an elephant and the object at which Fred had clutched and saved himself was one of the enormous curved tusks, to which he was now hanging, high above the drift below.

CHAPTER X.—Lost.

Fred's surprise at finding himself hanging from the mammoth's tusk was so great that he lost his hold and went tumbling down into the snow. He fell feet first into a deep drift. Luckily he did not go over his head and the first object which met his gaze when he looked around was Nick's feet rapidly vibrating in the air within an inch of his nose. It was a case which demanded prompt action. Nick was hopelessly imbedded in the drift and in a fair way to smother if something was not done immediately. It was impossible to catch hold and pull him out, but Fred was not to be stopped in the work of rescue. His hands began working right and left like a snow plow, and in a moment he had cleared so that poor Nick could take his proper position, head up and feet down.

"Oh, Fred!" he gasped, almost strangled. "Oh, Fred!"

"Brace up!" cried Fred. "We're alive, anyhow. Look up there and tell me what you see."

"Gee! An elephant!"

"A mammoth. The curved tusks tell that. See, its hide is woolly; that's another sign."

There stood the strange prehistoric beast, his hind quarters enveloped in the ice, which filled the entire place under the shelving rocks. His head, tusks, trunk and one foreleg projected. It was a wonderful sight and as rare as it was wonderful. Fred went on to tell Nick how similar discoveries had been made in Siberia from time to time, not failing to mention the fossil mammoth in the museum at St. Petersburg, which was found

frozen in the Siberian ice in the same way nearly a hundred years ago. While talking he was still watching for Raoul. Again and again he shouted to him, and Nick, who had a most powerful voice, tried it, too. It was all no use, however, and Fred began to grow more alarmed for the young Russian than he was for himself and Nick.

"We have got to try to get out of this somehow," replied Fred decidedly. "I don't propose to stay here."

"Not much. We can't do that, and I don't see how we are going to get out of this hole, either."

"But we must, Nick. We must break our way through the snow."

"Which way? This is a regular trap. There are rocks on all sides of us."

It was a fact. The hole was about twenty feet deep on three sides, while on the side where the precipice was it was fully forty. The situation was a puzzle, but Fred went to work with a will, breaking a passage through the snow until they reached the rocks opposite to the mammoth, where, with the greatest difficulty, he managed to climb up to the level. Nick had a still harder time of it, but at last, with Fred's help, he succeeded in getting up. The boys now found themselves in a long, narrow valley between the hills. There was a good deal of snow on the ground here and it was hard walking, but they started off bravely toward the east, feeling perfectly certain that the valley must end at one of the numerous channels of the Lena delta. Once they reached the river Fred anticipated no trouble in making his way to the boat.

They had not gone far, however, before their hopes were dashed, for the valley took a sudden turn and they were brought up standing against a wall of rock a hundred feet high and over. Opening off between the hills to the west was a narrow passage—canyon it would have been called in the far West—which, being followed a short distance, ended abruptly against a similar wall of rock with another passage opening to the north-east, which, being followed, turned due north for a short distance, ending against rocks, as the others had done, with still another canyon running south. Here Fred halted, his face showing how concerned he felt.

"Nick, this is a bad job," he said; "by the time we get out from among these hills we shall be so turned around that we shan't know where we are, and yet we can't go back."

"I know it. To go back will only land us in that hole again."

"That's all. I haven't seen a place where we could climb up to the top of the hills. We have just got to go on, Nick."

"Then let's do it," said Nick, "and the sooner we know the worst the better, I say."

There was not much talking as the boys pushed on through the dreary canyon. Fred thought most regretfully of Raoul. He had taken a great fancy to the handsome young Russian. Should he ever see him again? It began to look doubtful, but there were still more serious things to be thought of than that. Suppose it turned out that they were lost. What then? As there was nothing to do but to keep on, the boys now pushed forward as rapidly as possible until suddenly they came out into a big round opening among the hills. It was the crater of an old volcano, perhaps, or something of that sort. The distance

across was about a quarter of a mile and opening off from it were a dozen or more canyons, like the one from which they had just emerged. Fred turned around, looked this way and that and then all at once exclaimed:

"By gracious, Nick, which one of those canyons did we come out of?"

"Blest if I know," replied Nick. "They all look just alike."

"And I never stopped to notice. There's fool business for you. We can't get back now even if we want to."

It was only too true. For some time past there had been no snow, and, of course, no footprints had been left behind them. Filled with a thousand fears, Fred hurriedly ran back to what he supposed was the canyon out of which they had come. To his disgust he found that this break only went about twenty yards into the hill. The next narrowed up to a mere rift at even a less distance. In the next there was a big boulder directly in the middle of the canyon which Fred could not remember. His face was as white as a sheet when they came out into the old crater again.

"Well," exclaimed Nick, "and what are we going to do now?"

"I'm blest if I know," replied Fred hoarsely.

"Are we lost?"

"I guess we are."

It was a serious business. Lost in the wilds of Siberia, could the boys ever hope to escape with their lives?

CHAPTER XI.—The Cry in the Storm.

As they were now pretty well tired out and ravenously hungry, they sat down on a rock and abandoned their provision bags before making any further move.

"We are lost, of course," remarked Fred, after the meal was over, "but I don't give up. I've been looking about while we were eating, Nick, and I think I've made a discovery that will set us right."

"What is it?" demanded Nick. "Blamed if I can see any hope for us at all."

"That's because you don't look in the right direction. Take the glass and look off there."

"The observatory on Big Bone Island!" cried Nick, as soon as he had applied the glass to his eye.

"Don't be too sure."

"But I see it."

"You forget station No. 2. It may be that."

"That's so. Do you think it can be?"

"I'm sure I can't tell. I'm traveling toward that observatory, however. We've got to take our chances of its being the right one."

"It's a long way off, Fred."

"So it is, but still I think we ought to be able to reach it in two hours' time."

The sky was soon clouded over and it had been steadily growing colder. An icy wind soon came sweeping down upon them, chilling the boys to the marrow, but at the end of half an hour there was as yet no snow. It grew darker and darker. The wind increased to a perfect gale and all at once the snow began falling in great flakes as big as an old-fashioned cent, the wind whirling them all around the two boys with blinding fury, and,

what was worse, it soon became perfectly evident that the storm had come to stay, nor did there seem to be any chance that, like the one of the day before, it might turn to rain. Fred put his arm through Nick's and in silence the two boys plodded on, keeping close to the edge of the bluff, which showed no sign of lowering to the water's edge.

"We are in a fix now," gasped Nick, after a little. "I'm playing out, old man. I don't believe I shall be able to go on much further."

"You must," replied Fred. "Don't say it. To stop now is to die."

"That's what's the matter. I realize it as well as you do, Fred, but my strength is just about gone."

"Hark!" cried Fred suddenly. "Didn't I hear a voice calling?"

"No, no! It's only the wind."

"No, but I did. It sounded off on the river. I wish we were down under the bank, Nick. Anyhow, it would be more sheltered there."

They stopped and listened, but the sound was not repeated. Just as they started to move on they heard it again, however, a wild hollering, a human voice rising above the howling of the wind.

"There's no mistaking it this time," cried Fred, "but which way it comes from is more than I can make out. Let's try and get down on the shore, Nick. The bluff will afford us some shelter, anyhow."

"Who do you think it is hollering, Fred?" asked Nick, shivering. "Can it be Raoul?"

"Maybe. I hardly think so. I don't see how he can possibly be here."

"We are here."

"Well, that's so, and he has had just as much time to get here as we have. How are you going to get down there, anyhow? I don't see any way unless we sit down and slide."

"Hello! Hello! Hello!" came the cry again.

It seemed to be right at their feet this time. Peering over the edge of the bluff the boys were able to see a small boat flying down the river, hurried along with the ice cakes by the swift current. There was a man standing up in the boat waving his hands wildly.

"Help! Save me! I've lost my oars!" came the cry in good English; then all in an instant the boat was swallowed up by the gloom.

CHAPTER XII.—Off With the Ice Jam.

"Nick, that was no man. That's a woman dressed in man's clothes!" cried Fred excitedly. "Quick! Follow me! We may be able to do something yet."

Fred knew what he was talking about, wild as the assertion seemed. In the momentary lightening up of the storm which took place as the boat went whirling by, he had caught sight of a big jam of ice cakes directly ahead. This, of course, was bound to check the advance of the boat, indeed, perhaps stop it altogether if the ice should happen to be wedged in from shore to shore, and the point was to get down under the bluff and find out. Fred solved the problem in short order. The side for the bluff was sloping and he just at down

and slid to the bottom, Nick following his example without a moment's loss of time.

"Help! Help!" came the cry again through the gloom.

"Run, Nick! Run, boy!" shouted Fred, and they dashed along the shore together.

In less than three minutes they were abreast of the boat. There it was wedged against a great mass of ice, with the water dashing furiously around it. The solitary figure was still standing up.

"Sit down!" cried Fred. "Sit down or you'll be in the water before you know it. I can get you off of there and I will."

"Oh, help me! Save me if you can!" came the answer, and the man dropped down in the boat, but Fred knew the voice was a woman's.

"I'll bet you what you like it's Raoul's wife!" he cried. "Stand where you are, Nick. I'm going out on the ice."

"Oh, don't," said Nick. "You can never do it."

"I can and I will. Here goes."

"Look! Look! See that hut down there under the bluff!" shouted Nick, wild with excitement at this important discovery. But Fred did not stop to answer.

He had already leaped upon the great mass of ice cakes which were tumbled about in every possible position. It was a regular ice jam and fortunately it was strong enough to bear the boy.

"I'm going, too, if you do, you bet I am," cried Nick, following his example.

Fred did not even stop to answer or look around. He climbed over the ice cakes, drawing nearer and nearer the boat at the risk of his life. The cakes sank under him, twisting and turning, twice throwing him down on his face, but still he persevered, while Nick, on the other hand, becoming alarmed, gave it up and retreated to the shore. He had scarcely put his foot on solid ground when, looking back, he saw Fred in the boat.

"It's all right!" he shouted. "I'm here. I'm going to work inshore, Nick. Look alive to lend me a hand."

He began pulling the boat forward by means of the ice cakes; cold work it was, too, and many was the cut he got on the hands from the sharp edges of the ice. Where was the person in the boat? Nick could not see, but all Fred had to do was to look down at his feet where she lay in a fainting condition and apparently unconscious. It was a girl dressed in male attire beyond all doubt, and Fred felt sure it was the same person he had seen on board the corvette. Several times he spoke to her, but she did not answer. She was crouching in the boat all in a heap, with her head resting on her hands.

"Run to the hut and see if you can't get a line, Nick," shouted Fred. "I'm afraid I can never get ashore so."

Nick started at top speed. The hut was only a short distance away, but before he could reach it there came a report like thunder and Nick stopped and looked back with sinking heart. It was just as he had feared. The ice jam had suddenly broken. Down the river the great cakes went sweeping, the boat following them.

"Good-by, Nick!" shouted Fred. "I guess I'm a goner this time. Good-by, old man."

CHAPTER XIII.—Husband and Wife.

It was fully five minutes before Nick Wendell recovered from the shock which the sudden breaking up of the ice jam caused him. An awful sense of fear seized him. He was now alone—lost in the wilds of Siberia, hundreds of miles from any human habitation, unless Station No. 2 could be so counted—alone—all alone!"

For a good ten minutes he shouted Fred's name as loud as he could bawl. The wind blew his words down the Lena into the storm, but no answer was returned. Nick hurried on past the hut, running as fast as the snow would permit him, calling and calling. After advancing about half a mile Nick decided to give it up and return to the hut. He was so cold that he could scarcely face the storm.

Shelter he must have before his strength gave out entirely. With one more despairing shout, which, like the others, brought no answer, Nick started to retrace his steps. This time he went closer in under the bluff, thinking that it would afford him better protection from the wind. He had gone but a short distance before he suddenly saw traces of footprints in the snow, their direction being toward the hut. This discovery threw the boy into a wild state of excitement.

"It's Fred. He has escaped!" he thought, and the thought gave him new strength.

He ran forward, shouting Fred's name, but there was no answer. As he neared the hut the footprints grew fainter and fainter and at length disappeared altogether. Nick could not understand it. He saw that they must have been made some time before and could not possibly be Fred's. Who, then, could have made them? Nick hesitated when he reached the door of the hut, hardly daring to enter. The door was closed and the snow had drifted against it a good deal, but there on the threshold was the print of one foot.

"Hello!" shouted Nick. "Hello inside the hut!"

There was no answer. Nick's curiosity got the better of his fears. He pushed on the door, which immediately yielded. One glance solved the mystery. There lay Raoul on his face, stretched out upon the floor, asleep or unconscious, or perhaps dead. Nick hastened to shut the door and do what he could for the unfortunate young man. He had a flask of whisky in his pocket, taken from the stores on the boat and brought along for just such a necessity as this. Turning Raoul over and finding that he was still breathing, Nick forced the bottle between his lips. The young Russian half revived and took a swallow and then another.

Nick drew back the bottle and waited for the stimulant to do its work. This enabled him to glance about the hut. It was a queer place and evidently very old, for the floor was deeply covered with dirt and the rough board walls were dark and grimy. There was a rude table, a long bench, one or two ancient looking chairs, pots and kettles, plates, knives, forks, etc., on a dresser which ran along one side of the room. On the other side were three bunks and a rowboat of ancient style lay along under the window at the back. Then there was a door opening into another room beyond and the remains of a ladder which had once led to a loft overhead. The ladder was a hopeless wreck, a mere mass of rotten wood.

Everything indicated that many years had passed since the hut was built or had ever been visited. The most interesting thing of all was a great open fireplace connecting with the clumsy stone chimney which Nick had observed outside. There was a big pile of rotten wood lying alongside of it, which gave Nick the cue to the proper thing to be done under the circumstances. He threw the wood on the stone hearth and soon had a good fire roaring up the chimney. Then he turned to look at Raoul, and, to his great satisfaction, saw that the young man had opened his eyes and was looking back at him.

"Is it you, Nick?" he demanded. "Where's Fred? What place is this? How did I come here?"

Nick flew to his aid and helped him up into one of the chairs, which he placed in front of the fire.

"I won't tell him about it yet," he thought. "It will only throw him off into another fit if I do."

"Fred's outside," he said. "Tell me about yourself. How did you get here?"

"I don't know. I'm sure I can't tell you," replied Raoul, shaking his head sleepily. "I waited for you up there on the hill, but you didn't come. I think I must have gone to sleep again. I remember dreaming that I was walking through the snow looking for you, but that is all I can remember. I don't know what's the matter with me. My head is all wrong. I wish you would give me another drink of that whisky. It will do me good."

"Take it—take it all and keep it," replied Nick, handing over the bottle.

Raoul took a good drink and was just putting the bottle in his pocket when a loud shout was heard outside.

"Hello! Hello the hut! Nick! Hello, Nick! Hello! Hello!"

"Fred!" Nick fairly yelled, making a rush for the door.

He threw it open and Fred, all covered with snow, came straggling in, carrying the unfortunate girl in his arms. Nick gave a joyful shout, which might have been heard across the Lena.

"My wife!" cried Raoul, staggering to his feet. In spite of her disguise he knew her. All his strength seemed to return in an instant. He took the unconscious girl from Fred's arms, and, speaking rapid sentences in Russian, staggered to the bunks and laid her down.

"Leave me with her for a little while, boys!" he exclaimed. "I've got work to do here. We will do our talking later on."

CHAPTER XIV.—In the Hut.

"This way, Fred," said Nick. "Oh, I am so glad!"

He dragged Fred into the other room and pushed the door shut, leaving Raoul and his wife alone together. A thousand questions were in Nick's mind, but he did not ask one of them, for he saw at a glance that Fred was in need of attention as much as Raoul's wife could possibly be. His wet clothes were frozen stiff and clung to him like boards. He was shivering fearfully, his teeth were chattering, his face fairly blue with the cold.

"Off with those clothes!" cried Nick. "You shall put mine on, or some of them, anyway—

hello! A godsend! Was there ever such luck? Whatever we need seems to come right to our hand."

It was indeed a godsend. There, hanging against the wall, suspended from wooden pegs, were all kinds of clothes, coats, shirts, trousers, some made of coarse cloth, others of bearskin and different furs. There were dozens of them and of various sizes and over in one corner was a collection of queer-looking boots and shoes. Nick felt like calling down blessings on the former occupants, whoever they might have been, for there were two lives there in the hut which might have been sacrificed but for this lucky find. The next half hour was one of earnest work on both sides of the door.

While Fred stripped Nick communicated his great discovery to Raoul and threw him out a good share of the clothes, which were in excellent condition, for in that cold climate nothing decays. Then Fred got a good rubbing down and a drink from the whisky flask. By the time he was dressed in a warm suit of furs Raoul threw the door open and called them in by the fire.

"It's all right now," he said. "She is warm and comfortable and is quietly sleeping. Speak low so as not to disturb her. That's my wife, Fred. She has told me what you did for her. I shall never forget this. Never! Some day, if we escape, you will know what it is to have done this immense service to the—I mean to me."

Tears were in Raoul's eyes as he paused abruptly and turned away. He had almost told who he was. Fred never doubted that in the end he would find out that Raoul was the son of some high Russian dignitary.

"I did my best," he said. "Let us sit down by the fire and talk it over. Here is Nick just dying to hear my story. I'll tell it to you both and then I want to know yours."

"I'll tell mine first," said Raoul quickly. "As far as I'm concerned it is nothing. That infernal drug has not got out of my system yet, it seems, and—"

"Nick has told me all that," broke in Fred. "Let us hope that you have seen the last of it, Raoul."

"I believe I have. My head is clear now and I am not a bit sleepy. Listen, boys, my wife's story must be told. You have earned the right to know a part of it, at least."

"I am the son of a man high up in the Russian government. Against my father's wishes I married in London a year ago an English actress, Miss Blanche Rowan. You see her sleeping there, the dearest girl in the world, boys, but my father never forgave me. He would not receive her. He never spoke to me from the day of our marriage. Some months ago I was ordered on board the Katherina and my wife was ordered to go with me. We did not suspect treachery, but it was all a plot to abandon us here. I have no doubt that Captain Demlidorff had orders to put my wife on the boat with me, but he did not do it. After the accident to the corvette, he, with the whole ship's company, took to the boats, as we know. They succeeded in reaching the second station and are there now, but my dear, brave wife, rather than stay with that wretch and abandon me, watched her chance, put on a suit of clothes furnished her by one of the junior officers, and made her escape in an open boat. It was her only hope

to find me, and although she fully realized the fearful risk she ran, she took her chances, and, thank God, we are together again, and thanks to you, Fred, my wife's chances of escape from this horrible country are now just as good as mine. I can never repay you—never—never! When I think of what I am and of my father's cruel injustice it makes my blood boil—it makes me ashamed of being a Russian. It makes—but there, boys. You've got troubles of your own. I will annoy you no further with mine. I'm done."

"Is your father the Czar of Russia?" asked Nick suddenly.

"Don't, Nick," said Fred. "Please don't." But Raoul never spoke. Getting up he began to pace the floor in a most agitated way.

"Don't be troubled," said Fred. "Nick shan't bother you with any more questions. If you want my story, boys, it's a mighty short one. I got my arms about the lady when the boat was crushed in the ice and by jumping from one cake to another, I at last managed to get ashore. Blest if I can tell you how I got her back to the hut. I made up my mind to do it and I did it—that's all."

"You're the bravest fellow I ever knew," said Raoul. "Now, boys, let's drop it all. We are companions and we must make the best of it. When my wife awakes not a word. Call her Blanche, same as I do. We'll be boys and girl together and we'll try and have as jolly a time of it as possible. Is it a bargain?"

The boys agreed heartily and for a long time they sat there by the fire discussing ways and means. Later Raoul's wife awoke quite recovered. The boys left the pair alone for a while and when Raoul called them in and introduced them Blanche received them in the sweetest possible manner, thanking Fred most heartily for all he had done for her husband and for herself. They became friends at once and before the storm was over, which was not until the next morning, they felt as if they had been acquainted for years. There was nothing in the way of eatables in the hut, of course, but the provision bags furnished them all they needed and when morning came Blanche took matters in hand and prepared a really creditable breakfast, which they all enjoyed. Raoul seemed to be quite recovered and was full of life and spirits.

"It's all coming out right," he said. "Something seems to tell me that we are going to escape, but first of all we want to get back to Big Bone Island. What about trying our luck in that old boat, which ought to take us down to where ours was left, if not all the way?"

"Big Bone Island it is!" cried Fred. "That's where we belong and the sooner we get back the better it will be for us all."

CHAPTER XV.—Trouble Ahead.

The storm had now entirely passed away and the sun was shining with that intensity only known in the Arctic regions.

"The river is almost clear of ice," announced Fred, coming in from outside, where he had gone to have a look.

"Yes, and the boat is all dried up and must leak terribly," said Nick, "besides, there are no oars."

"Don't worry about the leaks," replied Fred. "Let's get her in the water. She'll soon swell up and I don't doubt will be tight enough to carry us."

"You boys get the boat down to the river and I'll make a hunt for oars," said Blanche.

"You won't find them in the back room," replied Raoul. "I've looked there carefully."

"Nor in the loft," added Nick. "You know I climbed up there this morning. There's nothing there at all."

"Who do you suppose ever built this hut, Raoul?" asked Fred. "It must have been here many, many years."

"Why, I think there can be no doubt it was built by ivory hunters," replied Raoul. "It wouldn't surprise me a bit if it was a hundred years old. You see in the last century we Russians did quite a trade in the fossil ivory which is scattered over here at the mouth of the Lena. From the accounts I have read of it the winters seemed to be more open then. Lots of vessels used to come here and there were ivory stations all along the coast."

"And why did they give it up?" asked Nick.

"I'm sure I can't tell you, boys. I only know what I've read."

"Let's get a move on the boat," said Fred. "We've got to make hay while the sun shines. There's no telling when another storm will strike us. Here, Nick, Raoul, lend me a hand."

There wasn't much trouble in dragging the boat down to the shore. When Fred and his companions shoved the old thing into the water it filled instantly. There was plenty of rope in the hut and Fred had made fast to a rock, so they just let the boat remain where it was until the timbers had time to swell. As they turned to go back to the hut Blanche appeared at the door in a state of great excitement.

"Oh, boys, I've made such a discovery!" she cried. "Come and see it!"

"Oars?" called Raoul.

"Yes, oars. Two good pair," answered Blanche, "but there is something better than that. You never thought about there being a cellar under the hut, but I did, and I've found the way into it and—but come and see for yourselves."

"I suspect it's a store of fossil ivory," said Raoul, as they hurried on to the hut, and this is exactly what it proved to be.

Blanche, who was as bright as a button, had discovered a trapdoor under the dirt which covered the floor of the back room and upon raising it found a ladder in good condition leading down into a cellar which extended under the entire hut. Here is where the oars were found, and there, packed in against the walls on all four sides, was an immense store of mammoths' tusks ready for shipment. Of course it was a find of great value, if the tusks could ever be taken to a market, for although the fossil ivory of Siberia does not command the price of the real article, it still has a ready sale.

"Just think of it!" exclaimed Fred, as they stood in the cellar staring about. "There must have been hundreds of skeletons robbed to obtain these tusks. It's a fortune in itself if one could only get it on board of some ship, but, of course, it is no earthly use to us now."

As the day advanced the boys kept a sharp eye on the boat, pulling it up many times and exam-

ining the seams. At last, about four o'clock, they hauled it out, and, to their great joy, found that it was quite tight. It did not take long to make a start then. They loaded on the best of the furs, thinking they might prove useful, and at a quarter to five started down the Lena, making the run to the place where their own boat had been left in less than half an hour. Now their troubles were practically over. Nick took charge of the old boat and the others went into the one belonging to the corvette and the start was made for Big Bone Island. As he pulled along with the swift-running current Fred noticed that Blanche kept looking back up the river rather nervously.

"Do you feel afraid of being followed?" he asked, for indeed she had been doing this right along.

"Fred," said Raoul, answering for his wife, "there isn't the least doubt that Captain Demidorff will try to follow Blanche sooner or later. I can't understand why he hasn't done so already, my dear fellow. There is sure to be fighting before we are through with this."

"Let it come," said Fred. "I'm ready."

"To fight for us?"

"You bet."

"Ah, but can we hope to hold out against them? There are a hundred men up at Station No. 2. If you only knew—but I must not talk about my affairs and I won't. There is going to be trouble, I'm afraid."

But it did not come during the trip down the river. In a short time the observatory at Big Bone Island hove in sight and the boys pulled aside into the channel which skirted around the island, coming to the place from which they had started out. Here they landed, and drawing the boats high up on the shore, picked their way among the big bones to the station.

"Welcome to your new home, Blanche!" cried Raoul, throwing open the door. "It is better than the one hut anyhow, poor as it is."

"Don't say a word against the hut," replied Blanche. "If it was a palace I could not remember it more gratefully. We'll make the best of it here, but now, Raoul, you know what you have to do, so you had better do it at once."

She pointed to the observatory and then went into the hut.

"Come, Fred," said Raoul, "we've got to go and spy out the land. Nick, may I leave the fire to you?"

"Of course," replied Nick. "I'll have it blazing in no time. Everything seems to be just the same here as when we left."

"Yes, if it would only remain so," murmured Raoul, "but the trouble is it won't. Come on, Fred."

He opened the observatory door and Fred followed him up into the tower.

"Let's have the glass," said Raoul, pushing aside the sliding sash.

"No," replied Fred. "Unfortunately you don't need the glass. There they come!"

He pointed off up the river and Raoul gave an exclamation of dismay. Four boats filled with men were shooting down the river. Raoul seized the glass, and, leaning out of the window, took one hasty look.

"Just as I thought!" he exclaimed. "Trouble is coming, Fred. There's that scoundrel Demidorff in the forward boat."

CHAPTER XVI.—Blowing Up the Berg.

Raoul was greatly disturbed at the sight of Captain Demidorff and his men. Of course, it was all very well to talk about fight, but when it came to four against fifty or more it seemed rather absurd.

"What is to be done? How can we save my poor wife from falling into the clutches of that scoundrel?" exclaimed Raoul, terribly troubled. "Fred, you are full of schemes. Suggest some way."

"Is it death to you if Demidorff gets here?" asked Fred, staring at the boats:

"It's worse than death. Demidorff has sworn to make Blanche his wife and would kill me to get her into his possession again, I have no doubt. He is a most treacherous man and at the bottom of all my troubles."

"We can fight to the last gasp, but that will do no good, Raoul. I see no way, but to immediately abandon Big Bone Island again, take to the boats, pull up into some of the narrow channels between the ice and so escape them."

"We might as well do the first as the last, for if we do the last it simply means that Demidorff will take possession of Big Bone Island and we will be left to starve to death out among the ice fields. No, Fred. That will not do."

"It will have to do. We can't hold out against that force ten minutes."

"How strange the sky looks," remarked Raoul, suddenly changing the subject. "Surely there is going to be another storm."

"It will be rain, then," replied Fred. "I wish it would come. If all this ice could be cleared away at the mouth of the Lena we might see something of the Seal, but there is no use thinking about that. We have got to decide at once what to do, for in ten minutes' time Demidorff will be upon us."

"And I can't decide," groaned Raoul, pacing up and down the floor. "Oh, Fred, this is a terrible thing! To think that I have brought all this trouble upon that dear girl down in the hut! Oh, why didn't I stay in England, where we would have been safe?"

Fred could see nothing in all these useless lamentations. If he had only had himself and Nick to consult, he would have hurried into the hut, loaded the boats with everything valuable which could be stowed away abroad and put off among the ice channels, hit or miss, but with Raoul and Blanche to think of he did not know what to do. But even while he stood there staring out the window at the boats the matter was decided for them for the time being at least.

As we have explained before, Big Bone Island lay in the mouth of the Lena, facing a range of high hills, between two of which the great glacier lay. Behind was a vast stretch of field ice piled up in great broken masses, which in some places reached a height of a hundred feet and more, and at all points offered such rough climbing as to be entirely impassable. On the right, facing up the river, was the narrow, open channel down which the boats were now coming; on their left was another channel, while in front the field ice was lower and broken into many channels.

As Fred stood there looking out of the observatory window it suddenly occurred to him that if the iceberg had lodged in the right-hand channel they would never have been able to perform the remarkable journey from which they had now returned, for all communication with Big Bone Island in that direction would then have been cut off. The thought had no more than crossed his mind when a thunderous report was heard over in the direction of the glacier and a second huge mass of glittering ice came tumbling off, falling into the channel with a force which sent the water splashing up a hundred feet into the air.

"Heavens! What is that?" shouted Raoul, running to the window.

Nick and Blanche came rushing out of the hut, startled by the noise.

"We are safe for the time being!" cried Fred. "Look, Raoul! It's a new iceberg formed and it has lodged between the field ice and the glacier. They can't get by it."

"Hooray!" shouted Raoul, throwing up his hat, "and they can't reach Big Bone Island while it stays there. We are all right now."

Looking off at the boats they could see that the Russians had been thrown into great confusion. The forward boats had stopped and the others were pulling down to join them. From their lofty perch the boys could look over the iceberg and see it all. Nick and Blanche now came hurrying up into the observatory and joined them and for some time all remained watching the boats. At last the Russians turned back, pulled off up the channel and disappeared.

It was an immense relief to all our party, and they went down into the hut to enjoy a good breakfast, which Blanche had prepared. The next two days passed quietly enough, the party being housed on account of the rain, which fell in torrents. Although a constant watch was kept from the observatory, nothing was seen of the Russians. The new iceberg seemed to be a fixture and the channel remained closed. Long before the rain was over Fred had determined on his course.

"We can't stay here, so we must be on the move," he said to Raoul. "I say let's load up the boats with everything we are likely to need and push on through the channels to the mouth of the river. There we stand some chance of finding the Seal, and if we can't do any better we can work our way along shore until we strike some whaler. One boat will hold us all and in the other we can stow away provisions enough to last us for two months at least."

This plan was fully discussed during those rainy days. Nick strongly favored it, and so far as he himself was concerned, and so did Raoul, but he felt afraid for Blanche's sake.

"You don't want to consider me at all," declared Blanche, during one of their discussions. "If we stay here no help can possibly reach us and sooner or later we shall have to have a fight with Captain Demidoff on hand."

"Yes," replied Fred, "and then there is the weather to be considered. The river may open up still more in front of Big Bone Island and it may not. If we hold on too long and winter catches us it means sure death."

"Decided!" cried Blanche. "We will go."

Raoul raised no further objection and the next

day, which was clear, was spent in the loading the spare boat with the best of everything the hut afforded.

"Shall we start at once, Fred?" asked Nick, when the work was at last complete.

"I say yes," replied Fred. "If Raoul and Blanche are ready, I don't see any use in delaying another moment."

Raoul came hurrying up carrying some articles of clothing found in the hut which he thought might be useful to his wife, who still wore men's clothes, as there was no way for her to make a change.

"Do we go now?" he asked.

"I say yes," replied Fred.

"All right, Blanche and I are ready, but hadn't one of us better take a look off from the observatory first? No one has been up in some time."

"I'll go," said Fred. "You get Blanche into the boat and make her comfortable. I won't be gone a minute."

Fred bounded up the stairs and threw open the window of the observatory, the first sweep of his glass bringing a shout.

"The Russians are right here!" he called down. "They are right behind the berg, the whole lot of them. They are doing something in the water—they are going to blow up the ice. He hastily shut the window and disappeared.

"It's a torpedo!" cried Raoul. "We had a number of small ones on board, but any one of them is plenty enough to blow that berg to pieces. I'm afraid we are in for it now."

The words were scarcely spoken when Fred appeared at the door of the observatory, and, before he was half-way down to the boat a terrific explosion burst over Big Bone Island. The ice splinters flew in every direction and came showering down upon the boat. The big berg toppled over and went sailing down the channel, revealing behind it a dozen boats filled with men.

CHAPTER XVII.—The Fate of Captain Demidoff's Crew.

Fred did the liveliest sprinting over the bones that he had ever done in his life and in a moment had gained the boat.

"In with you!" cried Raoul. "We've got to go now whether we want to or not. I'm afraid there is going to be a fight before we are through."

"There's Captain Demidoff standing up in the forward boat!" exclaimed Blanche. "What is that he is saying, Raoul?"

Raoul did not answer. Demidoff was shouting out something in Russian. A dozen or more rifles were leveled at our little party, but there was no firing, as it was perfectly plain that the boats were out of range. Looking back, Raoul burst out with a torrent of unintelligible words, as Fred and Nick pulled for all they were worth.

"Oh! oh! oh!" he exclaimed. "If I only had the power! Never mind! My day may come yet and then—ha! They are firing. A waste of cartridges. They can do nothing until they are nearer. I wish the ice would close on them and cut them up."

"Quiet! Quiet!" said Blanche. "Don't let them work you up so."

"See, their shots don't come anywhere near us!" cried Fred. "If we can only work around that point of rocks on our right, we may give them the slip yet."

Raoul quieted down instantly. The case certainly looked very doubtful. As soon as he had made sure that the shots could not reach the fugitives, Captain Demidorff stopped the firing and the chase began in earnest. The Russian boats steadily gained. Here, where the field ice was low, there was no chance of hiding.

Fred and Nick worked in and out of the tortuous channels as fast as possible, and were rapidly approaching the point of rocks where the high, bleak hills projected out into the Lena delta when all at once a crashing among the ice cakes arose behind them, such as they had never heard before. Raoul sprang up in the boat and looked back.

"Heaven help us!" he exclaimed. "The whole field behind the island is on the move now. That's the torpedo's work."

"More likely to be the work of the rain," said Fred. "We are in for it. Faster, Nick. Faster! Pull for your life! The Russians can't escape, but if we can get under the lee of the point we may."

It was an awful moment, but worse was to come. Silence fell upon the whole party—it was no time for talk. Raoul and Blanche stood up in the boat, watching, but Fred and Nick stuck bravely to their oars. On came the vast mass of field ice, loosened at last from its lodgment of many years.

"Heaven help those poor people!" groaned Blanche. "They are drowned."

Raoul said nothing, but it was evident from his face that he was not wasting much sympathy on his enemies. On came the ice with a fearful roar, the great hummocks crashing and grinding against each other. Captain Demidorff and his men hastily turned out of the field and made for the main channel, trying to follow the path of the iceberg. It was too late, however.

In less than three minutes the ice was upon them. It parted at Big Bone Island and the left-hand mass, sweeping down upon the boats, ground them to splinters, while the right-hand pack came rushing down directly in the path of Fred and his friends. An awful yell from many voices broke upon the air as the Russian boats were annihilated.

Blanche dropped into her seat and buried her face in her hands, stopping her ears with her fingers to shut out the cries of those doomed wretches whom nothing could save. But Raoul, with the air of a monarch who had ordered it all, still stood up in the boat, looking back until the cries had died away and the last boat disappeared.

"That settles them," he said, grimly. "Boys, my enemies in Siberia are no more."

"And we can say the same for ourselves in a moment," replied Fred, hollowly. "Look behind us! We can never escape!"

And indeed it looked so. Not a hundred yards separated them from the vast mass of broken ice which came sweeping down the Lena, with deafening noise and at a terrific speed.

CHAPTER XVIII.—A Race With the Ice.

Raoul dropped back into his seat and, without a word, took Nick's oar away. It was time. Poor Nick was badly winded, but Fred still seemed as fresh as when he began.

"Is there any hope?" asked Blanche.

"There's the bluff. If we can round that before the ice strikes us we are probably safe," replied Raoul, calmly. "Fred, if I ever do escape, if I ever do get back to Russia and regain my proper station, don't you think for a moment that I shall forget what you two fellows have done for me."

Fred made no answer. He could not speak; death seemed very close to him then. Nearer and nearer they drew to the bluff; nearer and nearer the ice came to them, when suddenly a cry of amazement went up from every one in the boat. They could look around the bluff now and there in the open water, under the shelter of the towering rocks, lay the Russian corvette, to all appearance not harmed in the least.

"We are saved!" cried Raoul. "We are saved!"

But this was by no means so certain then, although it proved to be the truth. By the most vigorous rowing Fred and Raoul brought the boat alongside the corvette, which was quite a little distance nearer than what would have been the safety point under the shelter of the bluffs. A line hung dangling down from the ship's ladder, which was in position just as the retreating Russians had left it. Nick caught it and made fast.

"Let's save the boats if we can!" he shouted. "I'll stay down and fasten the davit ropes, Fred."

It was bravely spoken, for the ice was right upon them now, the racket and roar of its coming being so loud the boys could hardly hear themselves speak. Fred sprang upon the steps and turned around to give Blanche a helping hand when Raoul lifted her up. In a moment he had assisted her onto the deck of the corvette.

"Follow, Nick!" shouted Raoul. "I'll attend to the boats. Let down the davit ropes, Fred. We'll save the provision-boat anyhow, even if we have to let the other boat go."

"No, no!" said Nick. "You go on. I'll take the job in hand."

"Obey!" roared Raoul, in a tone which admitted no dispute and scared Nick so that he went scampering up the ladder, more afraid of the young Russian officer than he was of the ice.

Fred flew to the davit and lowered the ropes a little further, they being pretty well down as it was. Raoul had scarcely done so when the advance guard of the ice cakes came sweeping around the bluff with a deafening roar.

"Hoist away!" yelled Raoul, and the boys, assisted by Blanche, hauled in on the lines for all they were worth.

"Hooray!" shouted Raoul, waving his cap as the provision-boat shot up above the ice.

He had just escaped. The other boat—it was the old one from the ivory hunters' hut—was ground to splinters in an instant. To be sure, the greater part of the ice followed the main channel, but quite enough of it came sweeping around the bluff to have sealed the fate of the travelers

from Big Bone Island, even if they had pulled a hundred yards beyond the corvette.

For more than an hour the rush continued and even after that the big cakes still came in isolated masses. It was probably the greatest cleaning out the Lena delta had experienced in many years. Great tree trunks followed the ice, huge fossil bones lay strewn over the cakes. For a long time Fred and his party continued to watch the wonderful phenomenon, but at last they grew tired of it and turned their attention to the corvette.

"Don't seem to be so very badly damaged after all," remarked Raoul. "I wonder how much water there is in the hold?"

"It must have made a good deal or Captain Demidorff never would have deserted the ship," replied Fred, "but the pumps will tell the story."

They walked aft first, as the corvette was pretty badly settled astern.

"She is aground, of course," remarked Blanche. "Certainly," replied Fred. She wouldn't be here if she wasn't. See Raoul, here is where the iceberg struck her. The guards are all carried away and everything on deck stove in, but I don't see any ice."

"The rain must have melted it," replied Raoul, trying the pump.

Fred and Nick lent a hand and found that the pump threw a pretty big stream.

"I'll go below and see if I can't get a measurement," said Fred. "Will you come, too, Raoul?"

"I might as well. We don't seem to be in any immediate danger of sinking. Blanche, you stay here with Nick. We won't be long gone."

"I'll take a look into the galley," said Blanche. "We've got to have something to eat, and although I have not been appointed to the office, I propose to constitute myself cook of the Katherina."

"No," said Raoul. "Get to your stateroom first, my dear. All our things are probably still there. I don't like to see you dressed as you are."

"You won't when you come back," said Blanche, blushing, and the boys started for the hold, where they soon made a discovery which raised their hopes to the highest pitch.

There was about eight feet of water in the hold, which all seemed to have entered through one small break in the side of the corvette, where one of the iron plates had been started by the ice.

"That's the Russians all over!" cried Raoul, in disgust. "No Englishman or Yankee would ever have deserted this craft. Demidorff must have lost his head."

"It looks so," replied Fred. "We can easily caulk up that break. Then all we've got to do is to pump out and start the engines going. I haven't the least doubt that we are stuck on a sand bank and I should be surprised if we couldn't back her off in ten minutes' time."

"Yes, but who will play the engineer?" asked Raoul. "I don't know any more about it than a cat."

"I'm good for that job."

"You are?"

"Every time."

"Good! good! Why was I not born a Yankee? I used to be proud of being a Russian, but now

I'm ashamed of it. Come, Fred, I must get back to my wife."

As they came up out of the hold the two boys had no more than closed the hatchway than both were startled by a loud cry aft.

"Heavens! that's Blanche's voice!" exclaimed Raoul.

The words had scarcely escaped him when the cry rang out again.

"Help, Raoul! Help! Save me! Be quick!" Raoul turned as pale as death and ran toward the door which communicated with the cabin, closely followed by Fred.

CHAPTER XIX.—The Corvette Afloat.

It is safe to say that Fred was almost as much alarmed as Raoul when the cry from the cabin reached their ears. To him the corvette was more or less of a mystery, and he could imagine any sort of danger lurking on board. Fred's idea was that some of the crew had been left behind to guard the ship and had now seized upon Blanche, but, as will presently be seen, this was very far from the truth.

"We want the rifle," he called to Raoul. "We had better get that first."

But Raoul paid no heed to this warning. It would have been better if he had, for trouble came the instant he opened the door which connected the forward gangway with the hatch, through which they had just come up out of the hold, with the cabin.

A wild yell greeted Raoul and a shower of arrows came flying through the door. Fred, who was a little behind, just caught sight of a number of dwarfish men clothed in clumsy bear-skin coats and breeches, when Raoul slammed the door shut and shot the bolt.

"Good gracious! it's the Tungsuese!" he exclaimed. "Blanche is lost! Quick, Fred! On deck! We want the rifle, as you say! Oh, why didn't I go into the cabin with her! Was there ever such carelessness as this?"

"You are wounded!" cried Fred. "Let me manage this!"

There was a stone-pointed arrow sticking in Raoul's shoulder. He fell back against the partition, half fainting, while a great pounding and kicking began on the other side of the door.

"The rifle! the rifle!" gasped Raoul.

He seized the haft of the arrow and pulled it out of his shoulder with a quick jerk.

"Never mind me. It's nothing," he added, making for the companionway. Fred dashed on ahead of him and gained the deck first. It was apparently deserted. He could see nothing of Nick, and although he shouted to him, he got no answer. With a sinking heart, Fred made a rush for the provision-boat, which still hung suspended from the davits, for it was there that he had left the rifle.

"Courage!" he exclaimed. "Don't give up, Raoul. We will save her yet!"

Instead of answering, Raoul tore the rifle out of his hand and started for the cabin.

"There they come!" shouted Fred, seizing a belaying-pin which lay on the deck.

Six of the curiously dressed men came scuttling up out of the cabin. They were fierce-looking

fellows, with long black hair hanging over their shoulders and no hats. All were armed with bows and arrows and one, who clutched Blanche by the arm, carried a long spear.

"Oh, Raoul! Save me!" screamed Blanche.

Raoul threw up his rifle and fired; one of the Tونغuese gave a yell, staggered toward the rail and sprang over, while the others turned and sent a volley of arrows flying back at the boys. Raoul rushed forward, firing again; meanwhile the man with the spear was dragging Blanche toward the rail on the side of the corvette toward the shore. It seemed to Fred rather slow business to try to shoot these savages down, one by one, and, quick as a flash, he took matters into his own hands.

Crouching down, he ran straight for the man who held Blanche, never heeding the arrows which came flying at him, and, springing upon him, gave him a rap over the head with the belaying-pin, which knocked him senseless on the deck. The other Tونغuese ran like sheep, tumbling over the rail and diving into the sea, then climbing into three curiously shaped canoes, which held two each. They went paddling off toward the shore in a hurry, while Raoul fired several shots after them, all without effect, as it happened to hurry them along, before turning to Fred and overwhelming him with praise for his brave act.

"Look out for this fellow! Don't let him escape!" cried Fred. "I must find Nick. Blanche, have they done you any harm?"

"Not a bit," replied Blanche. "I'm all right, but they scared me terribly. I was in my stateroom and had just finished changing my clothes when they came bursting in upon me. Go, Raoul! Help Fred! Never mind me!"

Raoul ran forward after Fred, who had not waited for the answer to his own question. They found Nick lying near the pilot-house, unconscious, with an arrow sticking in his side. This was a bad business and a terrible setback to our little party on the corvette. The Tونغuese are a race something like the Esquimaux, who wander about the wilds of northern Siberia.

They are great thieves and much fiercer than the Esquimaux; there was no doubt that they had come on board the corvette for whatever they could steal. The remainder of that day was one of anxiety. Nick was taken below and put into Captain Demidoff's stateroom. He soon recovered consciousness and, after his wound had been dressed, declared himself quite comfortable. His story was that the Tونغuese came on deck before he had any idea of their approach, pulling themselves up by the anchor chains.

As soon as Nick saw the first of the party come over the bows he started to run for the rifle and was shot down. After that he remembered nothing until he found himself in the berth with Fred bending over him. The arrow had entered his back just under the left arm, inflicting a painful wound, but both Fred and Raoul had strong hopes that it would not prove serious and they were right, for within two days Nick was on his feet again, weak but decidedly on the mend.

During these two days Fred and Raoul improved every moment. The Tونغuese did not return. The man Fred had knocked down had disappeared. Probably he recovered consciousness while the boys and Blanche were attending to

Nick in the cabin; at all events, he had disappeared when they came on deck again. The first day Raoul and Fred worked like beavers repairing the leak in the hold and succeeded in caulking the plate without serious difficulty, Blanche patrolling the deck with the rifle while they worked. The day passed without alarm. Fred watched that night and Raoul the next, but nothing more was seen of the Tونغuese, so they came to the conclusion that these undesirable visitors must have been simply a wandering party who had moved off in some other direction and could never trouble them again. The second day was devoted to pumping out and so was the third, for it took two days to do it. As the water in the hold decreased the corvette rose astern, but still remained fast aground. It was Fred's turn to watch that night. Three times he went down to see how Nick was getting on and along toward five o'clock he was just starting for the cabin again when Nick suddenly appeared on deck.

"What in the world are you doing here?" cried Fred. "Don't you know that you are running a terrible risk?"

"No, sir! I'm all right now!" answered Nick. "May not be able to do my share of work for a day or two, but I'm through with lying down there in the bunk. By gracious! we have started, haven't we? Why didn't you tell me, old man?"

"Hooray!" shouted Fred. "Never knew it! We must call Raoul and tell him the good news."

It was so. The corvette was afloat, moving slowly away from the retreating shore.

CHAPTER XX.—After the Mammoth Tusks.

"Hello, the engine room! Breakfast is ready! Ahoy, there, Fred! Didn't you hear the bell?"

Raoul pushed his head into the engine-room, where Fred had been working for two good hours, cleaning and polishing, with Nick seated in the engineer's comfortable chair watching him.

"Breakfast be blowed!" answered Fred. "I don't want any breakfast till I have finished this job."

"Come now," said Raoul, "that's an insult to my wife's cooking and a piece of downright cruelty to me. Look! It is nine o'clock and I'm as hungry as a wolf. But as to eating without you two fellows, it's not to be thought of. I just won't do it and Blanche feels the same way."

"Give me ten minutes more," said Fred.

"Agreed. How are you getting on?"

"Fine."

"Steam all up?"

"Yes, sir."

"Everything in working order?"

"I believe so. Don't want to start the engine going, though, till every part of the machinery has been thoroughly oiled."

"That's right. Better be sure than sorry. We are steadily drifting, Fred. Already we are pretty well down the river."

"Well, what harm?"

"I want to go the other way, that's all."

"Hello! What's your idea now, Raoul?"

"My idea is to make money. Boys, as the case stands with me I can never go back to Russia, and if we are fortunate enough to escape from Siberia

it will be necessary to have something to live on—"

"We have got it right here. How about salvage?" demanded Fred.

"It's ours sure if we succeed in making a port, but, of course, the business must be transacted in your name. I can't go into it, so the salvage is yours and I am going to depend upon old mammoth bones."

"Nonsense! You are one of us. It's share and share alike, but mammoth ivory is not to be sneezed at. Of course, you are thinking of the hut, Raoul, and I'm with you there, if you think we can work up the channel without running aground."

"I don't think there is any doubt about it. I don't think there is any channel to consider. I believe we shall find it all open water now."

"We shall soon know," replied Fred, who had been steadily working. "There, now; I'm done. Nothing remains but to start her. Raoul, can you steer the corvette?"

"No," replied Raoul frankly. "I positively can't."

"I can," said Nick.

"You must not think of it," said Fred decidedly. "Best thing you can do is to go back to bed."

But Nick only laughed and carried his point in the end. As soon as breakfast was over the start was made. Nick took his place in the pilot-house, gave Fred the bell and in a moment the propeller began to grind.

"Hooray! we are off!" shouted Raoul, who stood at the bow with Blanche by his side.

They were now pretty well down toward the mouth of the Lena and, as it turned out afterward, a good ten miles from Big Bone Island. Nick understood his business perfectly and soon had the corvette headed up the river. After they had been running about ten minutes Fred came on deck to have a look.

"Everything is working splendidly," he declared. "How about the leak?"

"The leak is all right," replied Raoul. "I just tried the pump. There is scarcely any water in the hold. We ought to make the hut in an hour and a half. I wish you could stay here on deck with us, Fred."

"That's just what I can't do," replied Fred. "I must get back right now. It may be all right, but I don't want to take any chances, so good-by."

Thus saying, Fred popped down into the engine room again and the corvette moved on up the river, Raoul and Blanche keeping a sharp lookout ahead. Everything had changed. The ice pack had completely vanished. A vast body of yellow, muddy water came sweeping down from the interior of that desolate northern land, where no civilized man has ever ventured. Occasionally great ice cakes were mingled with it, but they were few and far between. Nick steered over close to the right-hand bank and the corvette kept steadily on her course until she was abreast of Big Bone Island, when Nick called down through the speaking-tube and Fred came hurrying on deck again.

"There's our old camp, sure enough!" he exclaimed, "and as true as you live the ice has all cleared away behind it as far as one can see. Raoul, it's a noble stream!"

"One of the finest in the world if it would only

run like this all the year round," replied Raoul. "Shall we stop at the island?"

"No. What's the use?"

"None, I suppose. Everything seems to be just as we left it. We may as well push on to the hut."

As he spoke Raoul turned a powerful field-glass upon the station on Big Bone Island. The door of the hut was closed, as they had left it. There was nothing about the place to show that it was inhabited, but if Raoul's glass had possessed the power of the X-ray and his vision could have penetrated that door a different story would have been told, for he would have seen each bunk in the hut occupied by a sleeping man. Never guessing this, Raoul put up his glass and the corvette steamed on her way.

CHAPTER XXI.—About the Boat That Came Out of the Fog.

No obstacle was encountered after leaving Big Bone Island, and within half an hour the corvette came to anchor off the hut. It was impossible to get within fifty yards of the shore, and so swift was the current that Fred felt very doubtful about the anchor, although it had apparently taken a pretty firm hold.

"I think one of us ought to stay by the steamer," said Raoul, "and that one is you, Fred. If she should happen to give us the slip while we are getting off the ivory it would be a bad piece of business."

"Who is going to do the work, then?" replied Fred. "Nick is not able to lift even one side of one of those heavy tusks and you and Blanche could never get them off alone."

"I can do a good deal more than you think for," replied Blanche. "You don't know how strong I am, Fred. At least I can try."

"I'll stay and take care of the steamer," said Nick. "Fred can give me points on the engine-room work and if she happens to go adrift I guess I can manage to bring her back all right."

A long discussion followed and in the end it was determined that no move should be made until the next morning, by which time it would be decided whether or not the anchor was likely to hold.

There was no darkness now, for the time of the midnight sun had come.

At twelve o'clock, when Fred was pacing the deck on guard, it was as light as at any time during the day.

The corvette had swung around and was now heading down the river, but the anchor seemed to do its work perfectly, and when morning came, everything being as it should, Fred and Raoul took the boat and pulled ashore, finding the ivory undisturbed.

From eight o'clock until six work proceeded steadily, the only break being for dinner, which was served at one.

Boatload after boatload of the tusks were brought off by Fred and Raoul.

When the boat came alongside Fred would go aboard and, with Blanche, help receive the big tusk as Raoul handed them up. Nick was not allowed to touch them and, as they worked persist-

ently, short-handed as they were, by supper-time the boys had every tusk on board.

The whole deck was littered up with those strange curved tusks, gathreed by the old ivory hunters many long years before.

"Why, it's a fortune!" cried Nick, as he looked around at the heaps of ivory. "If we can ever get them to a market we shall be rich for life."

"To say nothing of the salvage on the corvette," replied Fred. "I believe we can do it. I wouldn't sell out my share in this Big Bone Island business for twenty thousand cash to-day."

"Do we start to-night?" asked Blanche, "or do we wait till morning?"

"What do you say to running down to Big Bone Island and anchoring there?" asked Raoul. "I'd like to have one more look from the observatory."

"Why, you don't think that there is a chance that any of the crew of the corvette can have escaped?" asked Fred.

"It might be so. We might see some signal." "In which case we would have to go to the rescue."

"Of course. I'm not feeling so savage as I did, Fred. Now that I see a chance for us to escape, ourselves, I don't like the idea of going off and leaving any of my fellow-countrymen behind in this horribly country. Still, I am willing to do just as you say."

"Oh, I'm willing enough to drop down to the island," replied Fred. "If we can't find an anchorage there we can keep on going. There's going to be a change in the weather, that's all."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean fog. Don't you see that big white cloudbank down the river, lying on the water? That's fog and the wind is shifting now; it is going to blow up this way."

"So much the more reason why we should be near Big Bone Island," said Nick. "I favor dropping down there. It must take but half an hour. We can postpone supper till we get the anchor down again."

It was so agreed.

As soon as steam was up the anchor was raised and the corvette started down the river, but by this time Fred viewed the change in their position with a good deal of doubt.

His prediction seemed likely to be realized within a few moments.

The fog bank was moving steadily up the river. It was an open question if they would be able to find Big Bone Island when they came abreast of it unless they made quick time.

Nick gave Fred the bell and Raoul and Blanche took their station at the bow, as usual.

By the time the observatory hove in sight the fog was almost upon them.

"We had better anchor where we are!" cried Nick, looking out of the pilot-house. "Don't you think so, Raoul?"

"I do. Ask Fred."

Nick called down the pipe and Fred came on deck.

"We must anchor at once!" he exclaimed, as soon as he grasped the situation.

They went right at it and by the time the anchor was down the fog had closed about the corvette so thickly that even the bank of the river, not ten yards away, could not be seen.

"That settles us for the present," exclaimed

Fred. "Get down to supper now, you three. I'll go on the watch."

"What's the use?" asked Raoul. "We are perfectly safe here. We are all tired let us all go down together. Here in the Lena there is no danger of collision, I'm thinking!"

"A ship without a watch in a fog! Never, while I'm aboard!" cried Fred. "Go on! Nick can relieve me as soon as you are through."

It was no use to argue with Fred, as Raoul understood pretty well by this time, so they went below and left him to pace the deck.

The fog grew thicker.

Fred, as he paced up and down the deck of the corvette, was too good a sailor not to strain his ears to catch every sound.

But what sound could there be there in that desolate region, except the rushing of the water past the corvette?

There should have been none and yet there was, for after a little Fred, to his astonishment, detected the unmistakable sound of oars.

At first he thought that he must be mistaken, but as he listened the sound drew nearer and nearer. Fred ran to the starboard rail and peered off into the fog.

"Boat ahoy! Boat ahoy!" he shouted.

There was no answer.

Still the sound continued.

"Boat ahoy!" yelled Fred again, and at the same instant he was able to perceive dimly through the fog the outlines of a ship's long-boat.

To his dismay a man wearing the uniform of a Russian naval officer sat astern and the boat was filled with men.

CHAPTER XXII.—The Nephew of The Czar.

At the sight of the approaching boat Fred lost no time in preparing for the worst.

Hastily pulling up the ladder, he rushed into the cabin and roused up Raoul and Nick.

Loud shouts came up out of the fog as they rushed on deck. Captain Demidoff and his men were hailing the corvette, in Russian.

They had done this before Fred ran down into the cabin, but he had made no answer, nor did he now, but looked at Raoul to see what he should do.

"Tackle them in English, Fred," said Raoul. "I won't show myself until we know what Demidoff has to say."

Fred seized the rifle and went bodily to the top of the steps and looked down.

The Russians stopped shouting and looked up at him with a good deal of astonishment.

They had been able to dimly discern the boy through the fog, but until he now appeared before them they had no idea who he was.

"Hello! hello!" cried Captain Demidoff, in good English. "So it's you, is it? Young man, in the name of all that is wonderful, how came you on board the Katherina when we saw you crushed in the ice; and how comes it that the Katherina is still afloat, when we left her sinking a few days ago?"

"I can answer all those questions, replied Fred, quietly, "but how comes it that you are alive when I had every reason to believe you were crushed in the ice?"

"We are all that is left of the crew of the *Katherina*," replied Captain Demidorff. "This one boat escaped and we were able to make Big Bone Island. Let down the steps. We want to come aboard."

Captain Demidorff spoke in a most conciliatory tone. The sailors rested on their oars in silence.

It would be impossible to board the corvette without the help of the ladder. Fred knew this, so he felt in no hurry to comply with the captain's demand.

"Wait a minute," he replied. "We want to talk this situation over, Captain Demidorff. I claim salvage on the *Katherina*. We found her abandoned and have pumped her out and repaired the leak. The corvette is in my charge. You no longer have any rights in the matter. I am captain here."

Captain Demidorff took off his hat and bowed with great politeness.

"Just so," he said. "I fully recognize that fact. Let me see, what is your name? I ought to remember, but it has slipped my mind."

"Indeed, you ought to remember, since you are responsible for my being here," replied Fred. "I am Fred Philips, one of the boys you took off the American steamer *Seal*."

"Captain Philips, I salute you," replied the Russian, taking off his hat again. "I trust you have no hard feelings about that little transaction. It was a necessity. I had no choice. Is your friend with you on the corvette?"

"He is."

"And the prince and princess?"

"If you mean my friend, Raoul Letosky and his wife, they are here too."

Raoul, who had been holding back, now stepped out into full view, as did Nick.

Fred kept Captain Demidorff covered with his rifle as the boys took their places at his side.

The instant Raoul showed himself Captain Demidorff removed his hat and saluted profoundly, as did every sailor in the boat.

He said something in Russian and was still talking when Raoul, with an imperious wave of his hand, cut him short.

"Speak English, you knave!" he cried. "Not a word that my good friends here cannot understand."

"Your highness, I obey your commands," was the reply. "I trust you have no hard feelings toward me. It is unnecessary for me to state that what I did was done by special command of his imperial majesty, the Czar."

"So you will say, and I presume it is true, but it does not mend the matter," Raoul replied. "The plot was to kill me and turn my wife over to your tender mercies. Because the Russian law forbids one like you to lay hands upon one of the Romanoff family you forced these boys to do the dirty work. Well, you see how they have done? The vengeance of heaven has fallen upon you and your crew, while we have been most mercifully preserved. Captain Demidorff, what do you want with me? Why do you come to this ship?"

"Pardon, your highness! Pardon!" said the captain, most humbly. "It is as you say. We are at your mercy. Would you sail away and leave us in this horrible wilderness to perish? You have removed everything from Big Bone Island in the way of provisions. At station No. 2 there were no provisions found. That is why we abandoned

it. Ask the princess, your gracious lady, if my words are not true. What then is to become of us, your highness? In the name of humanity, I put it to you. If you refuse to let us board the *Katherina* then let Captain Philips shoot us down, one by one, for we had better be dead than be left on Big Bone Island after you sail away."

"Don't refuse them, Raoul," said Fred. "No good can come of it. Let the captain come on board and deliver himself up. We will hold him a prisoner. As for the men——"

"Fred," broke in Raoul, "it shall be as you say. The men will not dare to lay a hand on me, but Demidorff must come as a prisoner. I will consent on no other terms."

Fred bowed with a certain sense of awe which Raoul instantly perceived.

"No, Fred," he cried, throwing his arm about our hero's neck. "Don't look at me that way, as though I were something better than you are. I am the nephew of the Czar of all the Russias. My father was the Grand Duke Ivanoff. I am to be his successor when I come of age, but I had rather be your friend and go with you to free America than have all the honors my birth can bestow upon me, even if my life was safe for a moment on Russian soil, which it is not. So no change in your manner toward me, Fred. To you I am only Raoul; now shall we risk this thing or shall we turn these men away and leave them to a living death?"

"I say let us do the right thing and take our chances," replied Fred, emphatically.

"That means take them aboard?"

"Yes."

"And you, Nick?"

"Whatever Fred says goes here," Nick replied.

"Captain Demidorff," said Raoul, calling down to the boat, "if you are willing to come aboard as our prisoner, Captain Philips consents to receive you. As for the rest, we will receive them, one by one, search them for arms, and so long as they behave themselves and attend to their duties there will be no danger, but let them beware! No mercy will be shown them if they attempt to make trouble. Do you agree to these terms?"

"I do, your highness. I plead mercy. I am entirely subject to your will," was Captain Demidorff's reply.

"Take no chances, Fred. Keep him covered all the while," said Raoul.

The steps were let down and Captain Demidorff ascended and stood with bowed head before the nephew of the Czar.

"Search him, Nick," said Raoul. "Demidorff, don't you spake to me; if you do I cannot answer for the consequences."

The captain bowed and stood in abject silence, while Nick made the search, taking from him a revolver and a sheath knife in a handsome case, together with a number of letters and papers, which Raoul promptly took possession of. With Nick's help, Raoul then tied Demidorff's hands behind him.

"In a few days, if you behave yourself, you may be set free," re remarked, as he took the captain's arm and led him away to the cabin, where he was locked in one of the staterooms.

When Raoul returned the men came aboard, one by one. Nick searched each man, but no weapons were found upon them.

"Fred, there is your clue," exclaimed Raoul, "but, my dear fellow, I think you had better let me manage them, since not one speaks a word of English. See that fellow with the big head? He is the engineer. That helps us out. Don't worry, they will never dare to raise a hand against the nephew of the Czar."

CHAPTER XXIII.—In Deadly Peril Again

"Fred, I wish these fellows had never come aboard. We were getting along so well and were all so jolly and comfortable before. Somehow I can't feel the same toward Raoul as I did before I knew he was the nephew of the Czar."

"Don't allow yourself to feel that way, Nick. I own I did at the start, but I'm getting the best of it and it's all nonsense, anyway. Raoul is the same old Raoul as he was before. I'm sure he hasn't changed one bit. He is stern enough to those Russians, but to us he is just the same."

"That's true enough, but I feel as though there was trouble hanging over us," sighed Nick. "I suppose it's all nonsense, but I can't help the way I feel."

It was morning of the second day after the coming of the remnant of the corvette's crew. The fog still continued and the Katherina remained at anchor off Big Bone Island. The engineer, Michelsky by name, had been put in charge of the engine-room and duties. At night Fred stood guard till midnight and Raoul and Nick from midnight until morning. Raoul would have gone on duty alone, but Fred positively would not hear to it, for which Blanche privately thanked him.

"I feel so worried about it all, Fred," she remarked. "I wish these men had never come."

But Raoul only laughed at her fears.

"As long as Captain Demidoff is a prisoner there is no danger," he declared. "There isn't one of these who would dare to raise their hand against the nephew of the Czar."

At nine o'clock that morning a land breeze suddenly started up from the southwest and in less than twenty minutes the last vestige of the fog had disappeared. Of course, this happy change created the greatest excitement on board the corvette.

"We must start at once," declared Fred. "I think we will make a run for Hammerfest, Norway; it is the nearest port outside of Russia and I think we all agree that we do not want to stick to the Corvette a moment longer than we have to."

"Right," said Raoul. "I'm with you there. Once in Hammerfest we will place the corvette in the hands of the Norwegian government and go straight to New York. I want to see Blanche safe. That accomplished, I shall know just what to do."

Orders were given the engineer to get up steam immediately, and inside of half an hour the Corvette was under way. Fred took the wheel and, while Raoul paced the deck, Blanche and Nick remained with him in the pilot-house looking back at Big Bone Island until the last vestige of the observatory disappeared. Fred steered well out into the channel and when at one o'clock they passed out of the mouth of the Lena River they turned to the west and ran along the coast, for Fred still had hopes of seeing something of the Seal. At ten minutes past one the dinner gong

sounded. Blanche had retained charge of the table, none of the crew being allowed to enter the cabin.

"Let us all go down together," said Raoul, coming up to the pilot-house. "One of the crew can take the wheel just as well as not. There is really no danger, Fred."

"I think I had better stay here," replied Fred. "It is best to be on the safe side."

"Then let me stay. I can steer as well as you. Fred, you work too hard. Go down and get your dinner; there's a good fellow. I shall enjoy a quiet chat with my wife alone, afterward. You will really accommodate me if you will do it my way."

Fred yielded to this and turned over the wheel to Raoul. Nick had already gone down into the cabin as soon as Blanche rang the gong. As Fred passed along the deck he noticed two of the Russian sailors standing close to the door, talking together, and he sternly ordered them aft. They scowled at him, but obeyed. There was a certain boldness about the look they gave him that Fred did not like at all and he hurried down into the cabin, feeling rather disturbed.

"Why, where in the world are Blanche and Nick?" he exclaimed, as he reached the foot of the stairs.

The cabin was empty. There stood the table with the meal spread upon it, but Blanche and Nick were nowhere to be seen and, to Fred's horror, the door of the stateroom in which Captain Demidoff had been confined stood wide open. The lock had been wrenched away. The stateroom was as empty as the cabin. Captain Demidoff, who had been released from his bonds the night before, had also disappeared.

"Treachery!" gasped Fred, and he turned and made a bolt up the cabin stairs.

At the same instant a shot rang out on deck.

"Fred! Fred!" Raoul's voice was heard shouting.

Fred bounded on and burst out of the companionway, only to be confronted by Captain Demidoff, who thrust a cocked revolver in his face.

"Stand where you are, Captain Philips!" he said, sneeringly. "Your little day is over. I am master of the Katherina now."

CHAPTER XXIV.—Conclusion.

If there was ever a braver Yankee sailor boy than Fred Philips we would like to know his name. Fred's rifle had been left in the pilot-house; he was entirely unarmed, for Raoul had the revolver taken from Captain Demidoff, and yet though he found himself at the mercy of this Russian scoundrel, who he felt must have overcome Raoul in order to get possession of the revolver, Fred, instead of showing the white feather, had the courage and the presence of mind to burst out into a loud laugh.

"Good for you, cap!" he cried. "I admire your grit. So you have managed to get free, have you? That's right. I was only waiting for my chance to lend you a helping hand—glad you don't need it, old man."

"What do you mean?" growled Captain Demidoff. "Don't think to fool me, boy, with any such monkey business as this. Your friend is tied

up in his stateroom; the princess is a prisoner in here; as for your friend, the prince, he is wounded and wholly at my mercy, so what about you?"

"Whatever you say," replied Fred, coolly. "Let's go on deck and talk it over, cap. If you have captured the corvette I'm on your side every time, and don't you forget it. You are short-handed here and don't want to do up a good man like me."

"Come on deck. You shall see how the case stands," growled Demidorff. "You don't seem to comprehend it now."

"All right," replied Fred, coolly, and in the face of the revolver he finished his ascent of the stairs.

Captain Demidorff stood aside to let him pass and that was the time that a Russian officer learned what a plucky Yankee boy can do. As Fred stepped off the stairway, quick as a lightning flash he made a grab for the revolver and got it, at the same time giving Demidorff a kick in the stomach which doubled him up and sent him sprawling back on the deck. Bang! bang! bang! It takes a Yankee to handle a revolver, and the three Russians found it out then. Before they could lay a hand on Fred he had fired three shots. Every one told. One of the sailors got a bullet under the shoulder, another got it in the hip and the third in the leg. The first two fell to the deck, the third ran on, only to be felled by a blow in the back of the head, for there was Raoul with his rifle clubbed and the blood all running down over his face.

"Fred! Blanche!" he gasped.

"Blanche is all right! Look out! Demidorff is on his feet again!"

Fred fired and missed, but Raoul, with his clubbed rifle, gave the treacherous Russian a stinging blow alongside the head which sent him back upon the deck, unconscious.

Then, for the first time, Fred noticed a steamer just rounding a point of land ahead. She flew Old Glory astern and Fred instantly recognized her.

"The Seal! Oh, it's the Seal!" he gasped. "Oh, if I only had help!"

"You have it. Here I am, Fred!" shouted Nick's voice right behind him, and Nick himself came bounding up out of the cabin, closely followed by Blanche, who screamed and made a rush for Raoul, who was just beginning to revive.

"They couldn't keep me a prisoner!" cried Nick. "They jumped on us in the cabin, Fred, but I slipped my cords. Run up a distress signal. Let Captain Rush know we are here. Seal ahoy! Ahoy there! They see us! They are lowering the boats! It's all right now!"

Within twenty minutes from that exciting moment Captain Rush and a dozen men came scrambling upon the deck of the corvette. If it was not all right when Nick, in his excitement, gave that wild shout it was all right then, and as it remained all right for our travelers from that time forward we may as well bring our story to a close. Raoul was not much hurt, the bullet from the revolver—which was one which Captain Demidorff had managed to conceal and not the one taken from him—had grazed the scalp, inflicting a painful but not dangerous wound. Before Captain Rush and his men arrived on board the corvette Fred, Nick and Raoul had secured their prisoners. The surprise of Captain Rush

and the boys' old shipmates when they listened to Fred's strange story knew no bounds. As there was rather a large crew on board the Seal, six men were detailed to the Katherina and these, with the help of Fred, Nick and the Russian engineer, who was allowed to remain at his post, finally brought the corvette into Hammerfest safe and sound. Captain Rush accompanied them on the Seal. He had given up the search for the missing whaler, which, as it was never afterward heard of, was no doubt lost with all on board.

At Hammerfest the corvette was turned over to the authorities, a claim for salvage being entered in Captain Rush's name, the prisoners being set free by Raoul's wish. This done the whole party sailed on the Seal for New Bedford, where they arrived in due time and without further adventure. Here the mammoth ivory was taken in charge by a responsible firm and was ultimately sold for a large sum—more than \$20,000.

Fred and Nick divided this money with their shipmates and Captain Rush and all shared in the salvage on the corvette, which, after all expenses were deducted, amounted to \$50,000 more, for the Russian government was forced to pay the cash down before the authorities at Hammerfest would give up the man-of-war. Upon the arrival at New Bedford, Raoul and Blanche went to New York. Fred and Nick expected to join them in a few days, but before they were ready to start for New York Fred received a letter from Raoul, stating that he had changed his plans and he and his wife had decided to return to Russia, as he had received a letter from the Czar, forgiving him and promising to accept his wife and restore him to his rightful place. After that Fred never heard any more. When he wrote to Raoul about his share of the ivory sale he received no reply.

With these large accessions to their capital, Fred and Nick shortly after bought a ship and went into the whaling business on their own account. Fred is captain and Nick first mate. They are still at it and have been most successful in their venture. They are good sailors and plucky fellows and we do not doubt that they will wind up as rich men, but it is safe to say that while there is a whale to be found in any other seas they will never again venture into the neighborhood of Big Bone Island.

Next week's issue will contain "ROLLY ROCK; OR, CHASING THE MOUNTAIN BANDITS."

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AL, THE ATHLETE, OR, THE CHAMPION OF THE CLUB

By R. T. BENNETT

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER I.—The Tramps.

Al Adams was the only son of a poor widow who lived in a cosy little cottage in the suburbs of the town of Middlewood. His mother was a dressmaker.

His father had gone West some years before to seek his fortune, and as he was never heard of again he was given up for dead.

At the age of sixteen Al had developed into a trained athlete, as his taste had always run in the direction of all kinds of sport.

He was a manly-looking fellow, with a strong graceful figure, dark eyes, and a good moral character, which had won him a host of friends.

The boy was a natural-born leader, and had organized a junior athletic club among the scholars of Claghorn Academy.

They called themselves the "Midwood juniors," and made their headquarters at an old boat-house which stood on the bank of the Red River.

This building belonged to George Harlow, a wealthy, retired banker who resided on Sunset Hill. As he was a man who approved of athletic sports for young people, he readily consented to let the Midwood Juniors use the building for a clubhouse when Al requested him to do so.

Then the fifteen members of the club set to work and began to fit the building up as gymnasium.

Most of them were poor boys, however, and their apparatus was all home-made; nevertheless, it met all their requirements.

With the beginning of the summer Al had got the boys together and started a series of outdoor sports, in which they took a deep interest.

One cool, pleasant morning he made his way to the club-house and found Nick Marsh, Fred Abby and Ed Turner in the "gym" waiting for him.

"Hello, fellows!" was his greeting. "All here?"

"You only ordered out we three," answered Nick. "What's the programme?"

"A four-mile run, then a rest, and after a swim in the river we will head for home for breakfast. Get into your togs."

The boys put on their running costumes and, locking the door, they went jogging up the road, with Al setting the pace at a rapid stride.

The young champion of the club carefully watched his men.

"By twos, now!" he suddenly exclaimed. "Nick, you keep pace with me. Your stride is about the same as my own. Ed, you are lagging. Increase the length of your step at least an inch more—understand?"

"All right," nodded Turner, as he obeyed the order.

"Good! Now you've got it. Fred, don't bend over so far! You can't breathe properly in that position. Straighten up a bit."

"How'll that do?" asked Abby as he threw out his chest.

"You're overdoing it now. Run like Nick."

Fred looked at Marsh, and seeing how he was carrying himself, he took the same position, and confessed:

"That is much better, Al. I seem to get my wind easier, and it isn't so much exertion to get over the ground."

"All you fellows are going right now. There is a right and a wrong way to do everything. I want to get you all as near perfect as possible. When we go up against the Mercury Athletic Club in their meet next week, I am anxious for my fellows to beat them all to pieces."

He referred to a rival club, composed of the sons of many of Midwood's richest citizens, with whom they had contested several times.

The captain of the Mercurys was Jim Drew, a spoiled son of the wealthy owner of the big cotton mill down by the river.

Both in school and in the field of sports the most intense rivalry had ever existed between Al and young Drew.

The latter detested and despised the captain of the Midwood Juniors, for Al had always managed to excel him in his studies and had invariably beaten him in contests of strength and skill.

In addition to this the two boys were greatly smitten with the beauty of Jenny Harlow, the banker's daughter, and as she had shown a decided preference for Hal, it increased Jim's enmity toward him.

With the boys all going along at their proper stride, and their breathing correctly regulated, Al felt much easier.

"I understand that Drew's father has hired a professional coach to put the Mercurys in training," said Nick, as he jogged along beside his captain. "That's going to make it harder for us to beat them."

For an instant Hal looked dismayed.

But he was a plucky fellow, and he rapidly got over the shock, and after a few moments' reflection he answered, coolly:

"Don't let that frighten you. Every one of the Mercurys are from two to five years older than our fellows, and yet they have not done so wonderfully well in the past when we have met them in trials of skill.

The fact is Nick, they haven't got the right stuff in them to beat us."

"Wish I had your confidence," declared Marsh with a frown.

"My dear fellow, half the battle in a contest is not to be afraid of your opponent. Always remember that."

"If Drew was a square man I wouldn't care," said Nick. "But he isn't. He is one of those contemptible, mean men who would stoop to any underhand trick to win out in a contest, and you know it, Al."

"I am aware of his treachery," assented Adams, "and it makes me very uncomfortable to have to keep watching the fellow all the time to see that he does not cheat us. But it can't be helped."

The boys said no more for a while, for the road had now taken a sudden curve, which brought them close to the river.

It was a delightfully cool, bracing morning, the sun only having just risen over the tops of the distant, hazy hills.

The foilage of the trees lining the road was glistening with the dew, the green velvety grass covering the fields was alive with humming insects, and the air with warbling birds.

At some distance ahead a big clump of bushes hid a bend in the road, and as the four boys ran ahead Al suddenly exclaimed:

"Halt!"

"What's up?" asked Nick, as they paused.

"Don't you hear that cry?"

Every one listened intently.

There was an interval of silence, and then there suddenly came to their ears a distant, boyish voice, shouting in frenzied accents:

"Stop! Stop! Do you want to kill me?"

The four young athletes glanced at each other wonderingly.

They could not see a soul anywhere near, and Al demanded:

"Do you hear it now?"

"Heavens!" gasped Nick. "Who is it?"

"Help! Help!" shrieked the same voice just then in louder tones.

This time Al located the sound.

It came from behind the bushes ahead, and he exclaimed, sternly:

"It's some one in danger and, judging by what was said, he needs our aid. Come on! Hit it up! Let us see what the trouble is, boys."

And so saying, he was off like a flash.

Up the road dashed the four boys, until at length they reached the clump of bushes, with Al five yards in the lead.

As he turned the bend in the road he suddenly came upon a scene that brought a cry of horror from his lips and caused an angry gleam to blaze from his eyes.

Two rough-looking tramps had a slender, delicate, little twelve-year-old boy tied to a tree, and were beating him with heavy switches until he cried with pain, while two more ruffians laid on the grass beside a fire looking on.

"Oh, please don't kill me!" the unfortunate little fellow was groaning, as the tears streamed down his pale, shrunken cheeks. "I won't ever try to run away from you again, indeed I won't!"

"Shut up!" roared the brute who was beating him, and he brought the switch down on his helpless victim's back with savage force. "I told yer as I'd peel ther skin off yer back if yer attempted ter light out, an' now I'm going ter do it—see?"

A loud scream burst from the little boy's lips.

It was more than Al could stand. His rage was aroused.

With one leap he reached the brute and, drawing back his fist, he gave the tramp a blow on the jaw that sent him reeling.

A yell of alarm escaped the villain, and his companion sprang aside, while the two on the ground suddenly arose.

"You coward!" cried Al, with flashing eyes. "I will give you a little of your own medicine. How did you like that?"

"Blast yer!" howled the brute, as he whirled around and saw that he was confronted by only a mere stripling. "Did you hit me?"

"Yes, I did!" retorted the angry young athlete, "and, by jingo, I'll give it to you again if you don't release that poor little fellow!"

"Oh-ho! Yer will, hey!" snarled the tramp, darting a wicked glance at him. "We'll see about that. Go for him, fellers!"

His three companions poured out a torrent of vile abuse upon the daring boy and made a rush at him.

Al did not get excited when he saw the danger that threatened, but he leaped back and made a motion to his friends.

"Each select your man and tackle!" he exclaimed.

The result of this order was startling, to say the least.

Down bent the four boys, ahead they shot in a flying wedge, and as each one caught his man by the legs there was a short, quick struggle, and in a moment more down went the tramps!

So much for athletic practice for just such a contingency as this.

A chorus of yells arose as the rasals struck the dust, and in another instant each boy was fighting like a wildcat to get his victim over upon his face and his arms behind his back.

Al made short work of his man.

He planted his knees in the small of the brute's back, and as he got a firm grip on his wrist and shoved the rascal's arms upward, a horrible strain came on the man's shoulder-joints, and he yelled with pain.

Al pressed his knee on the man's arms, and holding them where they were, he pulled out his handkerchief and tied his wrists together.

Then he sprang to his feet and glanced at his friends.

They were all busy as bees, and he ran from one to the other, lending them assistance, until all the tramps were secured.

"Guard them!" was his order, as he ran toward the tree and pulled out his pocket-knife to release the prisoner.

The tramps were furious, and raved and swore at the boys like a pack of madmen.

All of them were half drunk, or the little fellows could never have gained the mastery of them so easily.

Al cut the rope that bound the boy to the tree, and was just about to speak to him, when he reeled back and fell to the ground.

"Heavens!" gasped Adams, glaring down at him. "Have they killed the poor little chap?"

Ed, Nick and Fred rushed over to him with scared faces.

The little boy laid as pale and motionless as a corpse.

Dropping down on his knees beside the boy, Al keenly examined him and laid a hand over his heart.

"Fainted," he announced to his companions.

"Then he isn't dead, after all," said Nick in relieved tones.

"Far from it. Fred, get a hatful of water from the river, and we will see if we can revive him. Hurry, now!"

Away dashed Fred, and when he returned Al bathed the little boy's head, and finally succeeded in bringing him back to his senses.

He instantly recalled to mind the cause of his former terror and leaped to his feet and attempted to run away; but Al had a restraining hand on his arm, and said in soothing tones:

"Hold on! We ain't going to hurt you, youngster."

(To be continued.)

PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, APRIL 6, 1927

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

HAS BATH BEFORE TRIAL

Judge Bierney in Chicago, Ill., ordered that Frank Glendon be given a bath before he would try him for picking pockets.

CLINIC FOR ANIMALS HAD BIGGEST YEAR

In the past year, according to its report, the New York Women's League for Animals helped more sick and injured and homeless dogs, cats, horses and other creatures than in any previous fourteen years.

The report states that 18,381 were treated, an advance of 2,529 over 1925. Free treatment was given 5,449 cases. Homes were found for 1,063 ownerless dogs and cats.

TOO MUCH INTROSPECTION

Philosophical and psychological studies are leading youths to suicide, it was said in Atlantic City, N. J., recently by Judge Frank M. Trexler of Allentown, Pa., for many years a Judge of the Superior Court of Pennsylvania. "Too much introspection and not enough concentration on the regular tasks of the day are the reasons for the increasing suicide rate among young students," he said.

"More attention to the concrete facts of existence and less wool gathering speculation on matters that are not vital in their careers, would keep their minds sound."

VEGETABLES FOR DOGS

Having founded a city for dogs in which the canines are taught the errors of their carnivorous ways and are made to eat only vegetable food, Junial Sheth, an eccentric Hindu millionaire in Baroda, India, now is bringing out a dog newspaper. The newspaper's policy is to eradicate the killing tendency in dogs.

Puppies are given an especially tasty dish, called shia, made from wheat flour, fried in butter and then slowly cooked in milk—with a dash of sugar and salt. The older dogs are given tougher bread and leathery pancakes.

To make the village safe from rats and mice, which might tempt the dogs, all the floors have been constructed with cement.

THE PERFECT ANKLE

There is no ankle in the world to beat the ankle of the English girl, says A. J. Munnings, R. A., the portrait painter, who is in great demand as a judge at ankle shows which just now are the fad here and there about the country.

"The English woman has perfect ankles—straight and true and as beautiful as any on earth, including the American girl's," Mr. Munnings declared after a ball at Norwich.

"Ankle awards are terribly difficult," says the artist. "Judging from the back is best. Ankles which appear perfect from the front are often disappointing at the back. In some ankles which are otherwise perfect the Achilles tendon does not come down gracefully."

Improvement in ankles is due to more dancing and more sport and exercise generally, he believes. "Ankles of today are a vast improvement on the Victorian age—but it was very difficult to get a glimpse of ankles in the Victorian age."

LAUGHS

GOT THE MONEY

Doctor—"Well, I'll get my money out of old Neverpay this time."

Wife—"You said you never expected to get a cent for treating him."

Doctor—"I will this time. His life was insured, and he's dead."

SELF-DEFENSE

Piano Manufacturer (hotly)—"Why didn't you show off that piano, instead of making such horrible noises on it?"

Salesman (apologetically)—"Those ladies live next door to me, and I was afraid they'd buy."

THE USUAL RESULT

Friend—"You took your son into your establishment some months ago to teach him the business, I understand. How did it turn out?"

Business Man (wearily)—"Great Success. He's teaching me now."

A LITTLE TOO SHORT

Employer—"What do you do with your Saturday half holiday?"

Clerk—"Oh, I have a good time thinking where I would go and what fun I could have if it were a whole holiday."

NO JUDGE OF BEAUTY

Artist's Sister—"Oh, George, your work is going to be appreciated at last! At the gallery today I heard Mrs. Highup say you had the prettiest picture on exhibition."

Struggling Artist (despondently)—"Mrs. Highup, unfortunately, is no judge. She admires that red-faced, pug-nosed baby of hers."

A TRIFLE TOO GOOD

Chappie—"I wish to aw-purchase an umbrella." Dealer—"Umbrella, sir; yes, sir. Here is something just out, sir—ten dollars."

Chappie—"Oh, not that kind. I've got one of that kind, don't you know. I want something to use when it rains, don't you know."

"Only Two Tramps"

"Ashes to ashes, and dust to dust!"

The earth and gravel rattled on the coffin as it fell from the minister's hands, mingling there with the tears of two boys who stood leaning over the open grave.

This scene occurred in the far-away city of Richmond, and it was into a house in that city that the two boys groped their way that night; they were roughly clad, and everything about them denoted poverty, as did also the two rooms, which had been their home and their mother's.

As the poor woman lay there on the bed, dying, she had called the boys to her side.

"I am dying, my darlings," she brokenly said. "I must leave you, but not forever—no—no; we will meet again—*there!*" and she pointed upward with one thin, white finger. "Promise me that, boys."

"We promise," was the broken reply.

"I am satisfied, then," she weakly said. "When I am dead, the sale of these things will enable you to bury me decently. That done, you must make your way to Philadelphia. Your father has a brother there who may take care of you; I would not ask him to help while I lived, for he was cruel—cruel to me when your father was alive. He was displeased at your father's marrying me; and when your father was sick on his death-bed, and I sent him word, he sent back the reply that he would care for his brother, but not for me."

"Your father refused to leave me, and died soon after. Should he not receive you well, there is another brother, Gilbert, who lives on the Hudson River—you will find his address in my pocket-book—go to him. You must promise me this, too, my boys."

They could not but promise as required, and an hour later they saw before them only the senseless clay, the cold outline, of what had once been their mother.

They had a few dollars left on which to subsist during the long tramp that lay before them.

Toiling on, they reached Philadelphia at last.

Being directed to the address they asked for, the twins found it to be a large and stylish house; at the parlor window they saw a daintily dressed young miss, who shrank back with a disgusted look as they mounted the steps.

"Only two tramps, ma," they heard her shrilly cry in response to a query of her mother's, just as the man-servant was in the act of opening the door.

"What do you want?" was the surlily addressed question. "Don't you know that the kitchen door is the place for such as you to ring?"

"We want Mr. Seabrook, if you please," said Ted.

"Indeed!" with a sneer. "You dirty vagabonds, what's your business with him?"

Ted flashed up, and seeing encouragement in Gil's blue eyes, rejoined:

"That's none of your business!"

"What! you young loafers!" cried the angry servant; and raising his foot, he kicked them down the stoop.

In their extremity they knew not what to do, and wandered dejectedly through the streets; they

heard a man addressed as Mr. Seabrook, and followed him into a bank; it was their uncle.

They entered, and inquired for him.

He saw them, and coldly dismissed them with a dollar, bidding them never come near him again.

But one thing was left—to visit their Uncle Gilbert, after whom Gil had been named.

Tramping along wearily they reached the busy, noisy metropolis of New York; here they remained several days, and then started for their Uncle Gilbert's place, some forty miles away.

They reached the country place, and turning down the road, entered the grounds of a splendid mansion, even as a carriage rolled through the gateway.

"It is the girl from Philadelphia and her brother!" cried Ted. "It was she who called us vagabonds."

And so it was.

They were cousins.

The girl recognized them in an instant, and communicated the fact to her brother.

Scarce knowing what to do, the twins halted when they had progressed some distance through the shrubbery-bordered walk, and threw themselves down in the rear of a summer-house.

They heard voices—those of their cousins, who entered the place.

"Ma says she's nearly worried to death by that horrid dressmaker who made these dresses."

"And here's another dun from my tailor."

"Ma says pa won't give her any money."

"He ain't got it to give," was the rejoinder; "what with keeping that big house and three or four servants, he can't make ends meet, and is getting more deeply in debt all the time. He gets five thousand a year and spends ten. If Uncle Gilbert would only die now, everything would come straight."

The hearts of the two listeners turned sick with disgust, though they were but vagabonds, and Gil, unable longer to bear it, gave a loud cough.

They sprang to their feet, and the girl uttered a shriek.

"What is the matter?" asked a gruff voice, as she rushed from the summer-house. It was their Uncle Seabrook.

"Tramps!" she exclaimed.

"Is that so? Sick 'em, Rollo!"

A big black dog nosed around a minute, and then with a low growl made at the twin vagabonds.

With a bound he was on Ted, and would have sunk his fangs in the boy's neck, had not Gil seized the ugly brute by the throat, and choked him off; never once did Gil loosen his grip until, with a convulsive tremor, the dog became a dead weight on his hands, and then he let him fall, stone dead.

Old Seabrook's face was purple with passion, and he plied his cane vigorously over Gil's shoulders.

"You thieving vagabond!" he cried. "You dirty loafer! Get out of here now, or I'll have you sent to jail!"

Smarting with their blows, for both had caught them, they proudly turned away, and were lost to sight in the shrubbery.

But they did not leave the ground and instead sought shelter in the barn, for the night was close at hand, and a storm was impending.

After a while they fell asleep.

They were awakened by a scorching blast which

swept across their faces, and jumped up to find the barn on fire.

A mass of flame barred their way to the door. They paused one instant, and then dashed through the flames, reached the open, and bounded outside, gasping for breath.

"Catch them!" cried a hoarse voice, and heavy hands were laid on them, while Gilbert Seabrook soundly berated them and sent one of his men away for a constable.

The barn was doomed, and burned to the ground before the eyes of its owner, and on the charge of setting it on fire the twin vagabonds were locked up.

They were tried before a squire. The evidence was not very complete, but a case was made out against them somehow—for they were only tramps whom it would be idle to have sympathy for—and they were sentenced to jail for sixty days.

During the trial they held themselves erect, and gazed proudly at Gilbert Seabrook, who knew not the relationship he bore them; and the irascible old man once or twice raised his stout cane to give them a good drubbing.

The sixty days rolled around, and they were released.

"Shall we go, Gil?" asked Ted, as they halted beneath a tree.

"Yes," was Gil's reply. "He treated us badly, still it is our duty to save him from being robbed. We can go there and warn them, and then leave."

Once more they trudged along toward the mansion, this time with far different feelings than before; they now went to do a service to the man who had treated them so badly.

They followed the railroad track until they came to his grounds, which they at once entered; the ground here slightly swelled, and the viaduct through which the rails ran was spanned over by an arched bridge of stone leading to the piece of ground washed by the river where stood the boat-house.

Far away they could hear the faint rumble of an approaching train, and paused on the viaduct's coping to see it go by.

As they stood thus, unseen by them, old Gilbert Seabrook came stumping alone from the boat-house.

He was near the bridge when a sight of the two intruders brought him to a halt.

On came the train; it rushed in sight, and the boys were watching it.

Gilbert Seabrook saw not the train, only knew that they were there, and with uplifted cane, and eyes fastened on them, he stepped forward, and—

A wild cry of horror rent the air. They quickly turned, and saw a man falling into the viaduct.

Wildly did Gilbert Seabrook clutch about for something to stay his fall, and Providence aided him to clutch the coping with one hand.

The boys were above him.

"Help me!" pleaded Gilbert Seabrook, turning upward a white, prayerful face; they recognized him instantly, as he did them.

On—the train came rushing; in a minute it would be too late.

"Help—help!" he shrieked, as his nerveless, overstrained fingers began slipping. "Help me! Do not desert me!"

They seized one hand; he raised the other, and that was caught by a firm grasp.

On—on—nearer—nearer—the whistle shrieking like a demon, on—on—the wheels grinding and roaring, on—on—the hot breath of the locomotive almost fanning their cheeks.

A long, steady pull, while old Gilbert dug his toes into the rough crevices of the wall, and—the train rushed by.

But it was robbed of its victim, for he stood there upon the coping.

"Heaven bless you!" he said, and then, after a glance at the danger he had escaped, he began to sink.

They caught him, and carried him in a faint to his house.

He soon came to, and, taking out his pocket-book, offered them money, which they proudly spurned.

"Tramps and vagabonds make a living by stealing and burning barns," said Ted, bitterly. "It's a wonder you don't have us arrested now on suspicion, because we entered your grounds."

Gilbert Seabrook's face flushed, as much with shame as anger.

"Forgive me," he said, at last. "Why came you here?"

"We were released from jail this very day. Several days ago we heard three men, whose terms expire to-day, plotting to rob your house to-night. Duty, not affection, brought us here to warn you."

"And now we will go," said Gil. Seabrook's voice was husky with emotion as he begged them to remain.

"If I have done you injustice," he said, "let me repair it; stay, and help protect me, since you have warned me of this danger of being robbed."

"We will," they answered, "and then we will go."

"Your names, what are they?" he asked, "you refused to give them on the trial. What are they?"

"Mine is Ted."

"And mine Gil."

"What else?"

"Seabrook," said Gil, after a minute's hesitation.

"Surely not my brother's twin boys?"

"The same."

Explanations followed, and in less than an hour every servant in the place had his or her orders to respect the boys as their masters.

"I should not have been so mad when I set the dog on you that day," he said, "only I had just overheard by chance some conversation between my niece and nephew."

"Which we also heard," said Gil.

"I sent them home the next day," he said, dryly. "They will never come here again!"

Neither they did.

Preparations were made, and the three convicts were captured that night and sent back to serve out longer terms.

Ted and Gil still live in the mansion by the river. Both have received good educations, and when old Gilbert Seabrook dies, they, and not the primp miss they saw in the window at Philadelphia, will come into possession of the broad acres and "powerful sight" of money.

PLUCK AND LUCK

CURRENT NEWS

ODOR OF GARLIC

Dairymen of Alamance County, Raleigh, North Carolina, continually worried with reports of onion flavor in the milk that they supply city residents, and cognizant of the widespread enthusiasm about, and ignorance of, vitamins, have decided in a meeting held recently to designate the flavor as "Vitamin O" and thus place a premium on the odor of the succulent garlic, writes County Agent Kerr Scott.

BATH OR JAIL

Asked to choose between thirty days in jail and a bath, Joe "Billybanks" Martin, Orchard Avenue, San Leandro, Calif., elected "hot water" in preference to the "cooler."

Martin, yecept "Billybanks" from the locally accepted belief that he developed the "Billybanks" Irish potato, was haled into the San Leandro Justice Court upon the complaint of neighbors, who declared that Martin hadn't treated himself to a bath since propagating his new variety of "spud" three years ago.

Martin accredited his water shyness to the fact that he was once shipwrecked while a sailor on the billowy Pacific.

WHEN TO SPANK

A simple rule of when to spank and when not to spank was set down by Dr. Daniel A. Poling, minister of the Marble Collegiate Church. Dr. Poling also is International President of the Christian Endeavor. He included his "rule" in an address at the Young People's Conference held in the Waldorf-Astoria, broadcast over the radio.

"I do believe in spanking or whipping a child and have so practiced, even as I was so practiced upon. Solomon was right! Some children, and I was one of them, cannot learn to live well without it. Others are not helped by it. Study your child and know yourself and never whip, never, when you feel like doing it."

JURY JOB BORES WOMEN

Sex equality has failed in the jury box in Dublin, Ireland, and legislators have drawn up a new bill exempting women from court duty.

Under the Constitution complete equality of men and women was established, with identical political rights and responsibilities. But women found serving on juries irksome.

Not more than thirty women have served on juries within the last two years, it having been arranged for them to be exempted upon application, and the Ministry of Justice concludes that the existing law does not justify administrative expenses.

INDIAN JUG FOUND IN ARIZONA

A priceless Indian jug, found in the ancient cliff dwellings of Casa Grande in Arizona by an old prospector, has been presented to the University of Santa Clara museum, San Francisco, Calif., by David Marks, a student.

The jug, characterized as an "archeological treasure" by the Rev. Cornelius J. McCoy, S. J.,

president of the university, was the prospector's gift to Marks when the student's mother befriended him.

LARGEST OYSTER EVER CAUGHT

George Barnes, of St. Michaels, State oyster inspector recently had in his possession one of the largest, if not the largest oyster ever caught in the waters of Maryland.

It was caught by Captain William Hunt in Miles River, off Long Point, near St. Michaels, Easton, Ind. It measured from one end of the shell to the other, 11½ inches in length, and was 6 inches in width and weighed two pounds and fourteen ounces. The oyster when shucked weighed one pound.

FIVE MEALS FOR BRITONS

Although they already eat four meals a day counting the inevitable afternoon tea, Britons are now adopting the custom in England of having a fifth repast. The new habit is called "elevensing."

Not only in the homes of the leisure class, but among office workers as well, it is becoming the practice to take coffee and a sandwich at 11 o'clock every morning.

Tea room proprietors recently have reported an unprecedented rush of patronage at that hour, and predict that "elevensing" soon will become a national fixture.

CO-EDS TO CHANGE HEADGEAR

A sex war threatens to break out in a new form in Glasgow University, due to the revolutionary change which girl students wish to introduce in academic styles. The traditional "mortar board" headgear doesn't sit well on shingled locks and the girls are accordingly agitating for the substitution of the beret.

The university senate, however, looks severely on the threatened innovation, fearing if girls start wearing the beret the men may want to follow suit, with disastrous effects to the dignity of traditional university apparel.

MONKEY FIGHT

The London zoo was in mourning after the battle of the century on Monkey Hill, in which sixty-one apes took part. One was killed and more than a score were injured. The cause of the fight was Mrs. Murphy, widow of Murphy the baboon, who died a few days ago. Because of the short age of monkey wives—there are sixty-six males and only six females among the zoo apes—Widow Murphy was the object of a general rush on the part of bachelor suitors, who fell out among themselves and resorted to primeval jungle methods to decide who would win her.

Unfortunately, the Widow Murphy herself got mixed up in the melee, and it was she who lost her life. After the battle the penitent combatants deposited her body in the Monkey Hill pond.

TIMELY TOPICS

SHRINE FOUND IN GERMANY

At the foot of a mountain near Treves, on the Rhine, Berlin, Germany, a shrine to Mithra, the Persian god of light, was discovered.

It was evidence that the cult of the Persian deity was in vogue throughout the Rhine country during the ancient Roman occupation.

DEVELOPED BARKLESS DOGS

By interbreeding with a type of Siberian sledge dog, a local fancier in Olympia, Washington, has developed dogs that do not bark. When hungry they have a manner of howling something akin to that of the wolf, but when well fed they are as silent as the giraffe, which has no vocal cords at all.

IMPRISONED IN VAULT

With President F. W. Blazey, of the Star Elevator Company, Cleveland, Ohio, yelling the numbers of the combination from within, detectives finally succeeded in releasing Blazey and five other employes of the firm from the huge office vault.

They had been imprisoned for about an hour by payroll bandits.

PEARL FOUND IN OYSTER

An oyster run at the market of James Edkins was caused recently in Pompton Lakes, New Jersey, when news of the discovery of a pearl valued at \$2,000 was spread about town.

The pearl was found by Charles Hissem, an employee, who started the task of opening sixty oysters only after another worker had refused.

SCIENTIST DISCOVERS GAS-EATING MICROBE

Motor Traffic has brought in a new microbe, Prof. Carl Neuberg of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Berlin, Germany, declares. It is a gas-eater, he says, which lives in and thrives upon the drops of gasoline that fall upon the highways or collect in the garages.

It is quite probable, Professor Neuberg thinks, that the motor-traffic microbe is new only in the sense of its just becoming known to science. He is endeavoring to find out where the little gas-eater lived and by what means he subsisted before the automobile came into existence.

WHITMAN SCHOOL FOR \$18

The frame school house in Woodbury, L. I., where Walt Whitman first taught in 1836 at the age of seventeen, was sold at auction recently to Frank Velsor, a local builder, who was one of two bidders. He paid \$18 for it.

L. C. Piquet, President of the Woodbury Board of Education, had hoped to find some one willing to pay to preserve the structure and move it intact. It must be moved or torn down to make way for a new school building.

Velsor said recently he would try to find some one who would pay him more than \$18 for it, but if he is unsuccessful he will tear it down and sell the fine old beams as lumber.

PENNY WORTH \$800

A United States penny, worth \$800, according to coin collectors' guides, has been on exhibition in the window of a jewelry store in Carthage, New York.

The owner of the coin requested the jeweler not to make known his name. It is said that only three of the pennies were coined because of the controversial nature of the inscription. It was passed down to the Carthage man from his great-grandfather.

CEMETERY ON BANKS OF RHINE

Excavators at Tergnay, small village in the Canton of Virton, have recently unearthed a cemetery of the Franks, early settlers along the Rhine, dating back to the fourth or fifth century. Eighteen perfectly preserved tombs have already been brought to light.

Valuable relics, urns, vases, hatchets, spears and various pieces of money found in the graves have been turned over to archaeological museums.

HERO DOG IN MUSEUM

Balto, the hero dog of Nome, seems destined to end his days in a cheap dime museum in Los Angeles, Calif. Balto led the dog team that dragged a sled loaded with precious diphtheria anti-toxin over many miles of snow trails to Nome two years ago.

Now, with several teammates, he is one of the exhibits in a "museum for men only." Their only exercise is taken in a narrow alley back of the museum. They are housed in cramped quarters.

GERMANS LINK AIRPLANE AND GROUND BY RADIOPHONE

Telephonic communication was maintained by an airplane while flying from Berlin to Frankfurt, Germany, according to a report to the Department of Commerce. The microphone used on the test was supported on the breast of the pilot, while the head phones were built into the flying helmet. The total weight of the plane's radio equipment was 48 kilograms. Power was taken from a small generator driven by a propeller.

BROWN JUMPS INTO ARENA

"Fight your own bull," may become an additional inducement to spectators of Spanish torador contests, as a result of the success of the first attempt to make bullfighting an amateur sport.

At the opening of a school for matadors at Los Rosales volunteers from the audience were called for to tackle the second bull. Leonard Brown, an English visitor, although he had never handled a sword, and it was only the second time he had seen a bullfight, jumped into the arena.

Taking a sword and cloak, he faced the animal, and, after a few minutes' maneuvering, killed it with a single thrust. The audience, which included many distinguished persons, gave Brown an ovation.

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